

**CHARLES STUART AND THE TRANSATLANTIC  
ANTISLAVERY CONNECTION**

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### **Dedication**

To Nancy, Zoe, and Max.  
For your patience, understanding, encouragement  
and love, I am forever indebted.

## **ABSTRACT**

The nineteenth century antislavery campaign was significant not only because of the importance of the mission, but because it represented one of the first social movements to operate on an international scale. The abolitionists, reinforced with Enlightenment ideals such as the brotherhood of man, liberty, and equality, which dominated the political thought of the day, were concerned with people beyond their borders. They found an outlet for their beliefs in the antislavery movement. Lending support to the humanitarian beliefs of the abolitionists was the argument of Evangelical Christianity, which professed unequivocally that slavery was a sin. These views were shared by both British and American abolitionists.

Any study of the antislavery movement is a study of the individuals involved in the movement. This dissertation argues that among the more influential individuals in the transatlantic antislavery movement of the nineteenth century is a man named Charles Stuart. While he has remained a little known figure, his contributions to the cause of abolition are significant and noteworthy.

As a retired military officer in the British Army, with a pension that enabled him to devote all his efforts to the cause of abolition, Stuart worked tirelessly, traveling frequently between Britain and the United States, bringing antislavery information to the attention of abolitionists on either side of the Atlantic. As a prolific writer of antislavery pamphlets and articles, as well as a

relentless lecturer and campaigner, Charles Stuart played a key role in turning the tide of public opinion away from the Colonization movement, which had been gaining momentum and which threatened to undermine legitimate antislavery efforts. Perhaps the most significant contribution made by Charles Stuart to the cause of abolition, however, is seen in his influence on a young Theodore Weld. Through the influence of Charles Stuart, Weld was converted to the cause of abolition and would choose to make abolition his life's vocation. Theodore Weld, largely through his relationship with Charles Stuart, would become one of the most influential American abolitionists.

This dissertation demonstrates how a better understanding of Charles Stuart, through his unmovable convictions, charismatic personality, exemplary piety, and unique style, helps capture the essence of the nineteenth century antislavery movement.

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## INTRODUCTION

A shadowy figure that emerges in a study of the antislavery movement is that of a man named Captain Charles Stuart. Major trends in the interpretation of the downfall of British colonial slavery encourage an analysis of the motives and activities of the humanitarians involved. Once seen as the major cause of abolition, humanitarianism had been temporarily relegated to the background by Eric Williams' famous economic interpretation in *Capitalism and Slavery*. While few historians remained completely satisfied with Williams' view, it was only in the 1970s that thoroughly persuasive rebuttals emerged in Seymour Drescher's *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* and Roger Anstey's *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolitionism, 1760-1810*. If Drescher was correct that slavery was a healthy and indeed an expanding economic force in the early nineteenth century, and if he and Anstey were right in their denials that the antislavery decisions were secured by the increasingly important industrial capitalist class, then there is justification in looking more closely at someone who conspicuously campaigned for abolition.

The failure of abolitionism in the United States, where slavery was not some distant overseas problem but woven into the socio-economic fabric, is much easier to explain than is its success in the British Empire. As James Walvin argues, it was possible for the British to "wax indignant" about slavery, because it

was so distant. Unlike the Americans, the British did not have to live “cheek by jowl” with slavery or with the direct consequences of black freedom.<sup>1</sup> But the intractability of the problem in the United States did not prevent some American abolitionists from looking to Britain for inspiration and encouraged some of their British counterparts to turn, after their own success, to help tackle the American institution. As the fight against American slavery stretched through decades of frustration, abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic argued about tactics and the relationship between abolition and other reform goals. In these circumstances, the career of one who worked in both the British and the American antislavery movements could only prove to be illuminating.

Charles Stuart appears mainly in the footnotes of British antislavery histories.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the American references to Stuart are in some ways more intriguing. In some, he is mentioned briefly as a “saintly” British abolitionist who influenced Theodore Weld, a man regarded by some to be one of the greatest of all American abolitionists.<sup>3</sup> Betty Fladeland, in the most detailed account of the Anglo-American antislavery community, revealed him as a colorful eccentric who had been involved in important antislavery activities on both sides of the Atlantic. The *British Dictionary of National Biography* had no entry on Stuart, but its American and Canadian counterparts mention him and suggest that he might be uniquely representative of an Anglo-American antislavery impulse.

What could be more fitting for an American abolitionist, than to be born in 1783, the year before independence was recognized, and to die in 1865, weeks after the end of the Civil War? As early as 1820, Stuart had been “waging successful war with the Negro slavery of the United States” by helping black

fugitives in Canada. Subsequently, like many American abolitionists, Stuart was involved in many reform activities, including those in upstate New York, where he had been a convert of Charles Grandison Finney, one of the most famous American revivalists. A decade later, after opposing the American Colonization Society in Britain, Stuart was an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the same New York region. Even in retirement, there is evidence to suggest that Stuart was a confidant of John Brown immediately before the raid at Harper's Ferry. And yet this American abolitionist was also a British abolitionist. Stuart took part as a pamphleteer and lecturer in the campaign that in 1833 had ended slavery in the British Empire. It is doubtful that there could be anyone more representative of that far-flung British world than a man born in the slavery society of Jamaica, educated in Belfast, who had served as a soldier in India, and had twice lived in Canada for lengthy periods of time.<sup>4</sup> Weld's significance was first argued by Dumond in *Antislavery* and by Gilbert H. Barnes in *The Antislavery Impulse*,<sup>5</sup> who together published much of Weld's correspondence in *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844*.<sup>6</sup> Barnes was the author of Weld's and Stuart's entries in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.<sup>7</sup> A later biography of Weld which mentions Stuart's influence but contains very little information about Stuart is by Benjamin P. Thomas, *Theodore Weld: Crusader for Freedom*.<sup>8</sup>

Research into a single antislavery career, even one as remarkable as Charles Stuart's, does not revolutionize the understanding of why people turned against slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It does, however, provide important insights into Stuart's behavior from the arguments of

other historians about these processes. His experiences with non-Europeans in Jamaica, India, and on the Canadian frontier, might well have made him a representative of an arrogant strain of abolitionism, described by Howard Temperley, in which determination to overthrow slavery was linked to a view of progress that assumed domination by Western civilization.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, despite his strenuous activities on the rim of the civilized world, Stuart was also emerging as a representative of the intense religious agonizing, which all historians would see as a major ingredient of the antislavery impulse.

Stuart was said to have had a rigorous upbringing from Presbyterian parents imbued with strict Calvinistic principles. If this background did not conform to Bertram Wyatt-Brown's profile of young Americans who emerged from essentially evangelical backgrounds to become abolitionists or missionaries, Stuart, after all, was not quite American. But in Canada, he had undergone the "conversion experience of rich personal meaning," also stressed by Wyatt-Brown. Stuart was indeed both a missionary and an abolitionist.<sup>10</sup> Another study which analyses the religious commitment of many abolitionists briefly mentions Stuart, but only as part of an examination of Theodore Weld.<sup>11</sup>

In one important respect, the research into the life of Charles Stuart has illuminated one important aspect of the antislavery movement. In the late 1820s and early 1830s, many abolitionists abruptly abandoned gradualist methods and began to insist on an immediate end to slavery. As David Brion Davis has demonstrated, immediatism could have different meanings for different individuals, ranging from an insistence on the immediate overthrow of slavery, to a belief that some preparation was necessary for such a radical reform. Davis has



also argued that the emergence of immediatism was the result of varied changes. These included a shift in strategy by antislavery activists, who had seen the failure of gradualist methods, and a more general and complex change in intellectual attitudes, as many people discarded the passive eighteenth-century belief in the inevitability of progress in favor of active personal commitment to make no compromise with sin. Although Charles Stuart was only one individual who underwent this transformation from gradualism to immediatism, his unique international background makes him a particularly important example in Davis' argument that these crucial changes occurred at the same time on both sides of the Atlantic. That theme has been expanded by Betty Fladeland who argues that by the 1830s, American and British antislavery activity was almost inextricably intertwined.<sup>12</sup>

Stuart's influence in this regard is not made clear even in Fladeland's study. His influence on Weld seems to support the contention of earlier historians that American immediatism was largely derived in Britain.<sup>13</sup> This assertion is also made by Donald G. Simpson in the *Canadian Dictionary of Biography*, as he argued that Stuart's "writings influenced the growth in the 1820s and 1830s of the antislavery movement in the United States." More in line with Davis' and Fladeland's views was the strong implication that Stuart's revivalist background might be as important as his British nationality. The question then that needed to be answered was not when Stuart became an immediatist but when Stuart became an abolitionist. If, as these accounts have implied, Stuart was already an abolitionist throughout the 1820s, why did it take him five years to convert Weld, whom he had befriended in 1825? The greater question at the outset is why

Charles Stuart isn't better known. One probable reason Stuart has remained in obscurity is that he married late in life and had no children to preserve his papers and write biographies, as did Garrison and Wilberforce. A large extent of existing information on Stuart is contained in the letters he wrote to Theodore Weld and Gerrit Smith. Stuart also proved to be a prolific writer, and these materials can be found in various libraries and in the pages of the antislavery newspapers that often published his writings.

Charles Stuart was born in 1783 in Jamaica, as his father was an officer in the British army. His early years were spent travelling a great deal with his parents. In later life, throughout his travels and wherever he happened to be living at the time, he remained loyal to the British Empire. His education was in Belfast, and he would return to Ireland later in life during the Great Potato Famine. An Irish Protestant background would be consistent with an anti-Catholicism that conditioned his responses to Irish poverty, yet Stuart's letters reveal that the religious fervor, which became characteristic of the mature man, was not the result of youthful indoctrination. The two biographical essays mentioning Stuart insist that his parents were "Presbyterians of the extreme Calvinistic type." Yet in his first book, in 1820, he described himself as "by birth, and by all tender associations of youth (to which my soul is alive) a member of the established church, and still her friend." His private letters reveal that it was after "I grew up and mixed with the world...that extreme Calvinistic views of God, were offered to me by very dear friends." Contrary to the suggestion in secondary sources of a rigorous religious childhood training, it was only as an adult that he began to

discover the Bible. He wrote to Weld that "My early youth & manhood were entirely destitute of Scriptural instruction."<sup>14</sup>

His upbringing could have been rigorous without being religious. His own written accounts, however, make that doubtful. Rather, they reveal a troubled childhood, one burdened by a sense of guilt, and a lifetime of searching for values rather than a rejection of a strict childhood regimen. Long before Stuart had the Bible to guide him and when he had "nothing to do with the churches," several things proclaimed "to me C. Stuart thou art a sinner." But these were his study of history and "the institutions of my nature," not the discipline of his relatives, "who taught me otherwise." Through adolescence, "my sense of sin & want continued & harassed me; until...the pride of virtue & of reason destroyed me; and self-complacency, took in a measure the place of self-humiliation."<sup>15</sup>

Not only does his own emphasis on self-instruction and "self-humiliation" suggest the absence of strong parental influence, but for a man whose correspondence was extravagantly emotional and frank, the omission of virtually all parental references is striking. In two public speeches, Stuart mentions that his parents are buried in the United States, but this is no doubt an attempt on his part to underline his credentials as an almost-American abolitionist.<sup>16</sup> Any attempt at a psychological interpretation of his personality would require much more information to establish whether this silence was the result of alienation or a childhood of separation. But such speculation cannot be pushed further. Stuart's own admission that his life essentially began with his discovery of the Bible must be accepted. He gives no date of this discovery, but his references to early manhood suggest that it could have been while he was in India. In 1798, at the

age of seventeen, Charles Stuart sailed from Britain for India as a cadet officer in the Madras army of the East India Company. He became a lieutenant in 1801 in the Fifteenth Regiment, Native Infantry, and in 1806 transferred with the same rank to the newly formed Twenty-first Regiment.<sup>17</sup> By all appearances, Stuart was embarking on a straightforward career. But the religion he had found and his own strange personality were to make his remaining years in India a crucial prelude to a much more significant and noteworthy career.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery*, 1996, p. 163.
- <sup>2</sup> See for example, Lowell Joseph Ragataz, *The Rise and Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833*, New York, 1928, p. 452; Christine Bolt, *The Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction: A Study in Anglo-American Co-operation, 1833-1877*, London, 1969, p. 7; Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding*, Edinburgh, 1974, p. 19; Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870*, Columbia, SC, 1972, pp. 13, 195).
- <sup>3</sup> Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War*, New York, 1962, p. 491; Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America*, New York, 1966, p. 169.
- <sup>4</sup> Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Co-operation*, Urbana, 1972, pp. 197, 200, 212-216, 221, 225-226, 276, 280; quotation from Donald G. Simpson, ed., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX, pp. 769-770
- <sup>5</sup> Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse*, New York, 1933.
- <sup>6</sup> Gilbert H. Barnes & Dwight L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844*, 2 vols., New York, 1934.
- <sup>7</sup> Gilbert H. Barnes, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVIII, pp. 162-163; XIX, pp. 625-627.
- <sup>8</sup> Benjamin p. Thomas, *Theodore Weld: Crusader for Freedom*, New Brunswick, NJ, 1950.
- <sup>9</sup> Howard Temperley, "Anti-Slavery as a Form of Cultural Imperialism," in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, eds., *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, Folkstone, 1980, pp. 335-350.
- <sup>10</sup> Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Conscience and Career: Young Abolitionists and Missionaries," in Bolt and Drescher, eds., *Antislavery*, pp. 181-203.
- <sup>11</sup> See Donald M. Scott, "Abolition as a Sacred Vocation," in Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, eds., *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, Baton Rouge, 1979, p. 70.
- <sup>12</sup> Davis' treatment of the origins and development of antislavery attitudes is contained in his two books, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, Ithaca, 1966, and *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, Ithaca, 1975. See also, "Immediatism: A Product of American and British Antislavery Thought," in Richard O. Curry, ed., *The Abolitionists*, Hinsdale, 1973, pp. 64-75, as well as "Slavery and Sin: The Cultural Background," in Martin Duberman, ed.,

*The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*, Princeton, 1965, pp. 3-31; Fladeland, *Men and Brothers*, pp. ix.

<sup>13</sup> See particularly Gilbert H. Barnes, "The Western Revival Origins," in Curry, ed., *The Abolitionists*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX, p. 769; *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVIII, p. 162; Fred Landon, "Captain Charles Stuart, Abolitionist," *Western Ontario History Nuggets*, No. 24, 1956, p. 2; Charles Stuart, *The Emigrant's Guide to Upper Canada or, Sketches of the Present State of That Province, Collected from a Residence Therein During the Years 1817, 1818, 1819*, London, 1820, p. 225; Stuart to Weld, August [?], 1859, Weld Papers.

<sup>15</sup> Stuart to Gerrit Smith, September 3, 1859, Smith Papers.

<sup>16</sup> *Liberator*, May 17, 1834, p. 79; *Emancipator*, August 5, 1834.

<sup>17</sup> *India Registers*, London, 1768-1876, vol. 1800, p. 168; vol. 1801, p. 120; vol. 1806, p. 222; Register of Cadets, L/Mil./9/225, f. 14ov., India Office Library, London.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE MILITARY YEARS

The obscurity that surrounds the formative years of Charles Stuart's life becomes clearer after his arrival in India. Here he became "Captain Charles Stuart" in an army that left very thorough records. The campaigns by Lord Wellesley, which transformed the Madras Presidency of the East India Company from a precarious outpost to the dominant power in southern India during the early years of Stuart's service, provide a plausible context for romantic notions about his military background. Here there would be no shortage of battles in which he might have received the bullet he was said by some to have carried in his body for the rest of his life. Here there was indeed a notable sepoy mutiny at Vellore in 1804, which was also to find a place in oral tradition current in Canada after his death in 1865. He was said to have earned the disfavor of authority by condemning the ruthlessness with which the uprising was suppressed.<sup>1</sup>

While military records shed some light on the career of Stuart, they do not confirm these colorful rumors. At no point, do the military records indicate that Stuart was incapacitated by a wound.<sup>2</sup> While these records do not rule out the possibility that Stuart saw the type of military combat that could have wounded him, they establish him as an administrator. His private letters reveal that he was engaged in Persian language studies and teaching rather than combat.<sup>3</sup> Further,

the records of the Vellore mutiny provide no evidence of Stuart's criticisms of British brutality. Instead, the archives provide a less dramatic but no less revealing insight into his character and experience. Whether or not there was a bullet in his body, Stuart carried with him for the rest of his days an emotional scar from the Indian career that ended in disgrace in the aftermath of a different mutiny.

To anyone who is familiar with the abolitionist, the figure that emerges in the 1806 Madras military records as Lieutenant Stuart, Hindustani instructor to the cadet officers at Cuddalore, is unmistakable. Amid the numerous references to other Stuarts, the instructor's memorandum to his superiors reveals an already intense, contentious individualist. Stuart had evidently been commended for his work, for he began by expressing the "purist Satisfaction" at the approbation of his superiors and a firm intention to continue as "zealously as ever." These words, however, introduced an appraisal of the language program from which only Charles Stuart emerged with any credit. Although the cadets were attending compulsory classes in the mornings, most were very casual about their studies. They were less interested in the private instruction he had arranged outside of teaching hours than in the secretive visits to Pondichery and Madras or illicit drinking opportunities closer to home. By contrast, Stuart was incessantly at work instructing the cadets and, in particular, directing a team of thirty-five "moonshees," who were compelled to share his dedication. The moonshees were meant to assist with instruction, but they also spent long periods of time copying manuscripts. Ten of them, who were unlucky enough to be either poor at English or very neat at writing, were, he reported, "constantly writing in my house" from



6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with an hour off for breakfast. They had produced 100 copies of a short, simple grammar he had written when he had found himself expected to carry out his duties with an inadequate number of copies of a printed text that was also inadequate in content. There was an urgent need for the authorities either to publish a printed grammar and dictionary or to employ a separate group of writers to transcribe the manuscript. The labor intensive methods that he described “do not seem to me to be the most efficient that could be adopted.”<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the picture it creates of a lone European constantly in the company of Indians, who is openly critical of junior officers and cautiously sarcastic about the policies of their superiors, this memorandum was in no way the work of a radical subversive. The long hours with Indian subordinates may conceivably have influenced his later sympathies for black slaves. More to the point, this experience appeared to confirm his convictions about the beneficence of British imperialism, which he would never lose. Stuart stressed the twofold potential of a properly backed language program. While British officers learned native languages so they could command, Indian instructors would improve their English, a process “which must have a very sensible influence in advancing the Enlightened views of government.” In his later years, Stuart would many times make more explicit the belief that underlay this remark, i.e., that Indian society was correspondingly benighted. In his most autobiographical publication, he would reminisce about his long exposure in India to the “pre-eminence of Britain’s genius,” by contrasting the “energetic and thriving progress of my country” with the “inert and decaying power of a native state.”<sup>5</sup>

In that same publication, he also revealed a distaste for his brother officers' standard "amusements of balls and plays and flattering female society," which was already foreshadowed in 1806 in his disapproval of the cadets' pursuits of worldly pleasures.<sup>6</sup> While such puritanical views must have isolated him from many of his compatriots, it would have taken an unusually sensitive commanding officer to react unfavorably to the seemingly insignificant criticisms contained in Stuart's memorandum. It was Stuart's misfortune, that in the years ahead, an officer's mutiny in the Madras army would induce such sensitivity and that, in those circumstances, his guarded criticism would be transformed into flagrant insubordination.

The mutiny of 1809 had its roots in several grievances in the army over the prior two years. Basic to the situation were the peculiar circumstances of the East India Company, with its many geographical centers of power, its dual character as a trading company and territorial authority, and its ultimate dominance of the subcontinent, still neither certain nor even clearly sought. The Madras officers of the company's army had long resented the higher allowances paid to their counterparts in Bengal, the center of British influence, as well as the undue proportion of commands allegedly given to officers of the royal army. More immediate grievances, emerging in 1808, concerned the sudden removal of financial perquisites, including a monthly allowance to officers for providing camp equipment and carriage for their troops. This allowance had been insufficient for its purposes during the periods of active duty, such as the long campaigns in southern India from 1803 to 1806. The decision to end it came in a

time of peace, when officers had hoped to recoup some of the expenses incurred during those years of heavy wear and tear on equipment.

Soon, many officers became aware that Lieutenant-Colonel John Munro, the quartermaster general of the army, had supported the decision. He was placed under arrest and accused of justifying his support for the measure with “false and infamous insinuations” against his brother officers. His response was to appeal to the civil government, which ordered the commander in chief, Lieutenant General Hay Macdowall, to release him. Macdowall, who was on the verge of retirement, was so incensed at being overruled that, on his departure from Madras, he left for publication to the army an Order of the Day severely reprimanding Munro for appealing to the civil authorities. The civil government responded by directing this order to be expunged from the public record and by dismissing Macdowall a day or so before his long-planned resignation became effective. At the same time, it suspended all the senior officers who had supported him.<sup>7</sup>

A widespread mutiny of officers followed these disciplinary measures. Underlying this apparently extreme reaction was the grim financial reality that, in an age of slow communication, suspension meant virtual impoverishment for at least a year, pending final decision by the supreme governing body of the East India Company, the Court of Directors in London. No less important, according to the army’s nineteenth-century historian, “the Madras government had shown themselves disposed to making an unsparing use of that severe, and therefore exceptional method of punishment without trial, and without disclosing the evidence upon which they acted.”<sup>8</sup>

The mutiny was suppressed by a combination of force and conciliation, with little bloodshed. Its significance for Charles Stuart's career lay in the way it shaped his future circumstances rather than in any immediate involvement. His name does not appear in any of the records of the mutiny. In 1808, while still a language instructor at Cuddalore, he became temporary commander of the cadet company. In 1809, the year of the mutiny, he resigned his teaching position but was promoted to lieutenant captain. In 1811, he received a further promotion to the rank of captain. While Stuart's steady, unspectacular progress suggests his detachment from the upheavals that marked the period, the mutiny had created a tense, mistrustful atmosphere, which no one could avoid. Although the authorities granted amnesty to virtually all who had mutinied, according to the published history of the Madras army, "the bad feeling, and dissension emerged by these lamentable events did not subside for many year." In 1810, several court-martials were held of officers accused of "insulting others who had sided with the Government." And in 1812, "an officer was suspended for having refused to dine with Colonel Conran, Commander of the Hyderabad Subsidiary Force, or to make any apology for his refusal." That officer, though unnamed in the report, was Captain Charles Stuart.<sup>9</sup>

Stuart's suspension became a drawn-out case ending four years later with a debate and decision by the Court of Directors in London. The accumulated mass of memorials, reports, orders, and secret letters regarding this case show that, although Stuart had not been directly involved in the mutiny, he had remained an outspoken critic of the government's arbitrary suspension of officers long after its suppression. Perhaps if Stuart had been more collegial with other officers, sharing

of such opinions wouldn't have seemed as subversive. But, as Stuart himself pointed out, his principles and temperament made him shun such contacts. He lived in "a more secluded manner" than did most officers, refusing to drink alcohol and seeking the company of a select few who shared his apparently growing interest in religion. When his corps moved to Bellary at the end of 1810, he messed with three other officers for some weeks, but, becoming aware that his political comments made him a marked man with the authorities, he ended this arrangement to avoid suspicion of exerting influence on them. After that, Stuart messed alone and kept his "obnoxious sentiments" to himself, unless asked directly to share his views.<sup>10</sup>

Each of these steps was in vain. When his company was transferred to Jalna in central India in mid-1811, secret orders preceded it from the adjutant general warning the commanding officer there, Colonel Conran, to keep a close eye on Stuart, an officer not "disposed to conduct himself with that respect for authority, and on those principles of subordination, which it is the Commander in Chief's determination to enforce throughout the army."

Stuart's own account, while strenuously denying any intended insubordination, made it clear why the authorities found his behavior so provocative. While en route to Jalna, he dined alone and associated "less with the other officers of the Corps than any other officer in it." He was the only one to refuse invitations of hospitality from officers already stationed at Jalna. Arriving on a Sunday, he spent the evening with a particular friend, who shared his belief that religion was the "Primary Duty of every Human being," and the two agreed to spend future Sunday evenings together while in Jalna. On the following Friday,

Conran acted on his secret orders by issuing the fateful invitation for Stuart to dine with him on the next Sunday evening.<sup>11</sup>

When the invitation arrived, Stuart, "regarding the Business as a matter of no importance whatsoever," wrote his refusal, pointing out that he had a prior engagement on Sunday evening. He would discover the following day that Conran had invited some 13 other officers to join him and only one had accepted. But this didn't seem to matter, as Stuart's refusal led to a series of events that, in and of themselves, showed how easy it was for Stuart to be provocative. On the Sunday in question, Stuart was interrogated by a superior officer. He pointed out that he was not convinced that this procedure was either "just or legal." But, "anxious to give as little trouble as possible," he proceeded to answer some direct questions with equal directness. It cannot be known if Stuart's rejection of Conran's invitation was by accident or design. When asked this question, Stuart replied, "It was by accident, because I happened to be engaged, and design because I did intend to refuse any private invitation with which Colonel Conran might possibly honour me." When asked if he intended to refuse any future invitations, Stuart replied, "I do intend to refuse any future invitation with which Colonel Conran may honour me."<sup>12</sup>

Within hours, Conran told Stuart that he would be reported to the authorities in Madras as a ringleader of a combination against his superior officer and that he would be sent under guard to Hyderabad to await further instructions. Stuart denied the charge and demanded a trial, but agreed to obey Conran's orders and expressed his gratitude for the "Indulgence of a Guard, so essential in that part of the Country." Upon reaching Hyderabad several weeks later, he wrote to the

Adjutant General of the army, insisting that he was aware of no principle, "religious, moral, political, or military," that should have made him regard Conran's invitation as a command. In a legalistic style that only infuriated authorities, Stuart wrote, reminding them that Lord Cornwallis, "one of the greatest and best men, that has ever graced the British name," has issued a regulation, "still, I believe, unrepealed...that Officers in common with other Gentlemen, have a right to choose their private Society." Stuart also demanded that he be allowed to defend himself in a court-martial.<sup>13</sup>

While Stuart's demand was consistent with his criticisms of arbitrary, secretive government, he most likely also knew that it placed his antagonists in a quandary. The correspondence that passed among his highest superiors and eventually between Madras and London made it clear that the authorities were deeply troubled by his insubordination because it reminded them of the "sentiments and...events, which at one period, threatened to destroy the interest of [the] Country in this quarter of the world." Yet the mutiny had ended with a general amnesty that made it awkward for authority to condemn a man for offences it connected with the previous disturbances. One year after the event in question, news of his suspension was finally sent from Madras to London. The military authorities reported that, after this banishment from Jalna, he had been allowed time for reflection and that all possible means had been exerted by the commander in chief, Sir Samuel Auchmuty:

...to induce him to correct his improper feeling; but reflection appears only to have strengthened Capt. Stuart...in his error and his punishment has been courted with an obstinacy, equal to the reluctance, with which it has been inflicted.<sup>14</sup>



There is no denying Stuart's obstinacy, but it lay in a strict adherence to principle that would also be revealed throughout his life. For Stuart to make a full apology would be to admit to wrong behavior on his part. In June of 1812, Stuart requested his return to England at the earliest convenience, because "my residence in this Country during the period of my suspension must be perfectly useless to our Honorable Masters." But Stuart could not afford to pay his passage, and it was only through a ship captain's charity that Stuart arrived in London one year later.<sup>15</sup>

Stuart's case would not be finalized for another two years. While his case was important enough to be heard by the Court of Directors, that body was also concerned with far more important matters. Upon arriving in London in June of 1813, Stuart promptly reported to the Court of Directors his arrival and requested the court's instructions.<sup>16</sup> If Stuart thought his arrival in London would bring about a swift decision by the court, he would be quickly disappointed. By the following January, Stuart's patience had evaporated, and he wrote a long and aggressive letter, reminding the directors of the year that had transpired since his suspension, for conduct which "no clause in the Articles of War, no part of your commands, no passage in the regulations of Government, nor any order of any kind that I ever received or heard of, rendered in any degree criminal." While he was respectful of the court's preoccupation with weightier matters, he reminded them of the importance in ending his uncertainty, because he was "destitute of every other provision."<sup>17</sup>

Some eight months later, after reviewing the case and in particular the aggressive letters from Stuart, the court concluded that he had "most



unwarrantably attacked the conduct of the Madras government.” The court believed that, based on what it found, Stuart should not be allowed to return to India and recommended that he be permitted to “retire from the Company’s Service upon the pay of his rank, viz. 10/-a day.”<sup>18</sup> One of the directors, Samuel Davis, submitted a long report dissenting from the court’s decision because of the unfair treatment of Stuart. While puzzled by Stuart’s “real motives,” he admired his underlying integrity, writing:

The stoic firmness with which he has endured adversity, & the freedom & acuteness with which he has endeavoured to show why he should appeal rather than submit, has been prejudicial to his cause, when meanness of spirit & the vice of dissimulation might have saved him.<sup>19</sup>

Davis’ argument confirms that Stuart was too individualistic to remain at home in the army. The case had reached the court in London because Stuart had refused the advice of the commander in chief in Madras to apologize and make his peace with the authorities. While Davis may have been impressed with Stuart’s integrity and commitment to principle, as well as with the force of Stuart’s arguments, Davis also recognized that the military required unquestioning obedience. He further wrote:

It is certain that to refuse advice is not always the best way to the favour of him that offers it, but when on such an occasion superadded to the refusal, the advice itself is discussed in a manner calculated to expose the unsoundness of the principle on which it is founded, that, which might have remained as simple refusal, grows into positive offence [sic], as it has done in the case of Captain Stuart.<sup>20</sup>

Stuart accepted his fate perhaps realizing that it was in many ways a fortunate outcome. On the one hand, it was no punishment not to be sent back to India, and, on the other hand, he was to receive a pension that would allow him a

greater independence. In addition, he retained his title of "captain" which would allow a certain prestige throughout his life. That title would also allow him to receive a more considerable land grant than would ordinary immigrants to Canada. It is uncertain exactly how Stuart spent the two years in London, waiting the outcome of his case. What is known is that, during this period of uncertainty, he was sustained financially by friends and sought refuge in religion. He purportedly tried to secure orders in the Church of England but was unsuccessful because current attitudes in the church were against the ordination of military men.<sup>21</sup> Despite the favorable outcome of his clash with the military, it was not a relaxed and fulfilled Stuart who left Britain in 1817 for the Canadian wilderness, but as his later writings would reveal, someone who was on the verge of an emotional crisis.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Percival Spear, *A History of India*, II, Harmondsworth, 1971, pp. 100-105; Landon, "Captain Charles Stuart," p. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> The outline of Stuart's military career can be found in the *India Registers*, 1768-1876, as well as in the Madras Military Consultations, found in the India Office Library, London.
- <sup>3</sup> Stuart to Gerrit Smith, May 1, 1835, Smith Papers.
- <sup>4</sup> Madras Military Consultations, Range 255, vol. 74, pp. 5764-5769, vol. 79, pp. 8314-8322, India Office Library.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, pp. 194-195.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.
- <sup>7</sup> William John Wilson, *History of the Madras Army*, 5 vols., London, 1882-1889, III, pp. 235-295.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Madras Military Consultations, Range 256, vol. 39, p. 10224, vol. 53, p. 6085; *India Registers*, 1809, p. 220, 1811, p. 220, India Office Library; Wilson, Madras Army, III, pp. 293-295.
- <sup>10</sup> Stuart to his superior officers, n.d., Madras Military Consultations, Range 257, vol. 52, pp. 5414-5416, India Office Library.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, T.H.S. Conway, adjunct-general, to Colonel Conran, April 9, 1811; Madras Military Consultations, Range 257, vol. 52, pp. 5398-5402, India Office Library.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5421-5423.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5480-5409, 5426-5440.
- <sup>14</sup> Minutes of Lt.-Gen. Sir S. Auchmuty, April 21, 1812; Conran to Maj-Gen. Pater, June 16, 1811, in *ibid.*, pp. 5387-5397, 5404-5405; Auchmuty to Court of Directors, June 14, 1812; G.H. Barlow et al. to Court of Directors, June 20, 1812, Madras Letters Received, E/4/341, vol. 39, India Office Library.
- <sup>15</sup> Stuart to superiors, June 19, 1812, in *ibid.*, vol. 57, pp. 8350-8351.
- <sup>16</sup> Court Minutes, East India Company, 1813, B/157, p. 233, India Office Library.
- <sup>17</sup> Stuart to Court of Directors, January 14, 1814, Madras Letters Received, E/1/127, p. 20A, India Office Library.
- <sup>18</sup> Court Minutes, 1814, B/158, pp. 1340-1341, B/159, p. 243; *ibid.*, 1815, B/160, p. 979, 998.
- <sup>19</sup> Court Minutes, 1815, B/160, pp. 1072-1079.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Stuart to Court Directors, January 14, 1814, Madras Letters Received, E/1/127, p. 20A; Sir J.C. Sherbrooke to Sir Francis Gore, cited in Landon. "Captain Charles Stuart," p. 4.

## CHAPTER 2

### FROM CANADA TO NEW YORK

In 1817, Charles Stuart received an 800-acre grant of land in Canada and left Britain for the wilderness. He went to Canada as "...an unknown stranger, and not desiring to be known." It was while experiencing complete solitude in the remoteness of Canada that Stuart's Christian faith for a time deserted him. Of the solitude, Stuart would write in an unusual book, *The Emigrant's Guide to Upper Canada*, "No voice was heard - no trace of life was seen. Death, not the destruction, but the prevention of existence - seemed to be spread along the rocks upon the matted moss." After weeks "Without Christ" his "...blind and raging passions" within his soul allowed his faith to be restored.<sup>1</sup> With a renewed commitment to Christ, Stuart could declare, "the divinity of Christ, the tri-une character of the Godhead; and the Holy Scriptures, as the only ultimate test of all religious and moral truth and knowledge."<sup>2</sup> Stuart joined his sister in Amherstburg, in Canada West, and became active in the affairs of the local church. During this period, Stuart entertained the notion of ordination. His ambition led to an exchange of correspondence with the lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, Sir Peregrine Maitland. Stuart would abandon his pursuit of ordination because of a conflict with the local bishop, Jacob Mountain, who had been criticized by others for inappropriate manners for an Englishman and for

preoccupation with questions of style, precedence, and political intrigue. Stuart would eventually declare that he could not accept ordination from bishop Mountain "because I believe him to be an unchristian overseer; a secular not a spiritual character. The feelings and principles I would try to establish would be at decided variance with his principles and his life."<sup>3</sup>

While Stuart dropped his request for ordination, he developed relationships with the local Baptist and Methodist churches. Religious toleration, he would declare, is the "noblest mark of political wisdom." Yet at the same time, the contradictions that haunted his life were evident, when he would attribute to those less tolerant than himself, "discordant and fiery principles, which are engendered by mutual ambition, intolerance and pride."<sup>4</sup>

Charles Stuart's first publication, the quirky *The Emigrant's Guide to Upper Canada*, was designed to help prepare those British citizens who might wish settle in Canada with what they might encounter. In addition to descriptions of local terrain and weather conditions, the book included moralisms and vitriolic patriotic statements. These characteristics led another proponent of Canadian emigration, Edward Allen Talbot, to dismiss Stuart's book as less a guide to Canada and more appropriately "a Pilgrim's Guide to the Celestial Regions." Talbot would go on in harsher tones to say of the book that it contained:

...such a confused medley of polemical theology, whining cant and complementary bombast, that it would require as much patience to travel through this duo-decimo volume, as to make a pedestrian tour through the whole of the Upper Province.<sup>5</sup>

Charles Stuart's first publication is less a guide to Canada than it is a guide to the man himself. In the *Emigrant's Guide*, Stuart described his spiritual crisis

in Montreal as well as his attitudes to the various churches, the Americans and American Indians, and people he served with in India. Most glaring, however, is the self-revelation of a man who was a puritanical bachelor, uncomfortable with women and attracted to the simplicity of life on the frontier. The book was published when he was in his late thirties, leading to the conclusion that he was more or less a confirmed bachelor. Stuart was drawn to the frugality of frontier life and saw the changes that were already coming to Canada as threats to the “domestic tone” of the Canadian women. Stuart said that Canadian women lacked the polish, “which at once adorns and disgraces the general mass of our European ladies.” He went on to say that “the passion for that polish is afloat. It is tending rapidly to displace the remaining and superior charms of that simplicity.”<sup>6</sup> Stuart’s emphasis on the “domestication” of women was literal. He enjoyed the company of other men and the rough, harshness of Canadian travel where...

You are served by men who look upon themselves as your equals, perhaps as your superiors. [The lack of separate accommodations] was an exceeding annoyance, that renders traveling with ladies a matter of sometimes real distress: Alone, a man may pass through profaneness, levity and noise...without noticing, if he cannot rectify them...but it is abhorrent to every tender, just, and delicate feeling, to see a woman exposed to such things, without the power of rescuing her.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, Stuart was uncomfortable with the sexual attraction women had on the men they traveled with. He encouraged all future female settlers to:

...watch by all that is lovely in yourselves...against the delusions of the destructive vortex, which seems to slumber before you. Believe not, that because modesty is consistent with exposure, exposure can be consistent with feminine delicacy.<sup>8</sup>

Despite spending two years in Canada, Charles Stuart had not found a permanent home. Most of his time, however, was spent in Amherstburg, across

the border from Detroit. It was here that Stuart first became acquainted with American slavery through the underground railroad which came up through Michigan.<sup>9</sup> As indicated by the title page in *Emigrant's Guide*, Stuart was already a magistrate in that western region of Upper Canada. It was to this region that Stuart returned after his year in England. The publication of his book had convinced him that he was an authority on Upper Canada, and he began writing to the government of Sir Peregrine Maitland, offering his advice. The letters addressed issues of improving the morals of the province. Maitland became so wearied by the tone and sheer volume of the letters that he finally wrote to Stuart asking him to stop writing. Stuart responded with a letter of his own stating that "I have always been aware that you have no time for fruitless correspondence...and I distinctly perceive that my correspondence with you has been worse than useless." Stuart then concluded the letter with more suggestions on how to improve the morals of the province.<sup>10</sup>

Charles Stuart's letter to Maitland did not mean an end to his writing. He was soon involved in a dispute with the military at Fort Malden concerning the extent of his jurisdiction as a magistrate. Stuart believed that, as a magistrate, he had jurisdiction over those military personnel stationed at Fort Malden. As Peregrine Maitland had before, Colonel J.P. Hawkins, an officer at Fort Malden, became wearied by Stuart's constant meddling. Hawkins finally wrote to his superiors in Toronto:

Do pray endeavour to prevail on Sir Peregrine to cause instructions to be sent to this troublesome magistrate, not to interfere unnecessarily with matters that are purely military, as he really seems inclined to be troublesome.... Believing him to be a good-hearted man, I have hitherto kept on tolerable terms with him, tho'



he has more than once before interfered improperly. In one instance he committed one of the men to the gaol, and kept him there for many weeks before he could be tried, after all of which the man was acquitted on trial. You are doubtless aware of Captain Stuart's eccentricity of character, but perhaps not of his having a strong propensity to meddle with the affairs of other people; even, I believe, to the neglect of his own.<sup>11</sup>

Colonel Hawkins, in his letter, was close to accurately characterizing Stuart. An argument can be made that Charles Stuart was a good person whose high-minded principles and intentions had lacked focus and direction. While his actions in Canada make him seem meddlesome and eccentric, they reflect an unfocused period in his life, searching for a focus that can be starkly contrasted with the single-minded commitment he would later display in his efforts as an antislavery leader.

Once settling in Amherstburg in 1821, Charles Stuart began working among the local Indians. As his *Emigrant's Guide* reveals, he was interested in this kind of work since the time of his arrival. Stuart's humanitarian attitude toward the Indians can be considered classic for his era. He viewed the Indians with "painful compassion" for their "helplessness and simplicity." At the same time, however, he was very intolerant of the "lawless, and capricious, and horribly cruel" side of their savagery. It didn't seem to trouble him that as a race they were "rapidly sinking into extinction" and that within half a century there would be no "genuine trace" of them. In spite of this, he believed that there was a need for a "missionary spirit" toward them and a need to consider them as "brethren." As to the day when their culture would disappear, Stuart hoped that a remnant would "survive to bless, instead of cursing the day, when the Europeans arrived to settle amongst them."<sup>12</sup>

While Stuart mentioned to Maitland his desire to be a missionary, there is little evidence suggesting that he actually took up mission work. He was, however, involved in some mission efforts. In 1821, Dr. John Bigsby, who was attached to a commission surveying the boundary between Canada and the United States, met Stuart in the company of two American clergy. They were on their way to establish a mission among the Indians on the banks of the Saginaw River, which emptied into Lake Huron. Bigsby, in his book detailing his experiences wrote:

There were in 1821 some remarkable persons in and near Amherstburg, to whom I had the good fortune to be introduced. I'm sure I shall be satisfying my own feelings, and doing honour to a man of high merit, in giving a brief account of Captain Charles Stewart [sic], late of the Honourable East India service. Although Captain Stewart resided in Amherstburg, and was still not thirty-five years of age, he had passed many years in Vellore; but for his part the affair must have been small; for his jealous masters dismissed him with full pay for life. He was handsome, frank, and energetic. His iron frame was indifferent to luxuries or even comforts; any hut was a home, and food was nourishment, provided he could be doing good to others; for he was, and is, a working Christian. At this time he was waging a successful war with the negro slavery in the United States. As a branch of this holy enterprise within the grasp of an individual of small means, and totally unaided, he devoted himself to providing a home to run-aways from the slave states.... His design was to establish in the neighbourhood a colony. For this purpose he bought a small tract of land in the rear of the village. As the poor fugitives came in, friendless and breathless, though exulting, Captain Stewart offered them protection and subsistence; the first being the necessary against stratagems, and even violence, of their pursuers; the latter his land supplied. The greater portion of these negro refugees became his tenants, and to this day form an orderly body of British subjects, numbering 174 in 1842. So well known throughout the United States is the fact that there is such an asylum for the wretched slaves, that from 1820 to the present day, at least 15,000 people of colour have come and settled in Canada West. That number is supposed to be there now, with churches and schools in different parts of the province. During the late rebellion, when the American symphisers [sic] invaded the British possessions, the

blacks eagerly offered their services to the Government, well knowing their fate if Canada should glitter as an additional star in the spangled banner of the American Confederation. Their offer was accepted. There is (or was) a coloured company of soldiers at Stone Bridge, Lake Erie. I spent a very pleasant evening at the cottage of Captain Stewart, a plain but comfortable abode on the edge of his purchase, in which he lived with his widowed sister, and her numerous and fine family. The negro village and the clearances were then but just begun. As it was a very rainy season, the land seemed to be a swamp, and the huts very indifferent affairs, but were thought to be palaces by the freemen who inhabited them. Subsequently heavy crops were obtained from their farms. Captain Stewart had the goodness to walk over some of them with me; and I am glad that I had the discernment to cheer him on in his difficult undertaking. Happy is the man who, with wisdom, selects and pursues some great, unselfish object. Its influence upon himself is most beneficial, as well as upon others, and will not cease with his life. 'A good man seen, though silent, counsel gives.' If this had been Captain Stewart's only work it would have been a noble benefaction to his fellow-men - well worth a life.<sup>13</sup>

The picture Bigsby paints of Stuart may be accurate in most respects, but it is wrong in one major area. Fred Landon argues that, Despite Stuart's role in Amherstburg with freed blacks and the influence this had on strengthening his understanding of the importance of the slavery issue, this period of his life cannot be marked as the beginning of his antislavery efforts.<sup>14</sup>

In 1822, within one year of meeting John Bigsby, Charles Stuart had moved from Canada to Utica, New York, to become the principal of the Utica Academy. While this is commonly thought to be the sole reason for his move, there is evidence to suggest that Stuart may have made many enemies in Canada and was seeking a change of scenery. Bigsby suggests that Stuart's encouragement of fugitives had made him unpopular with the Amherstburg community, stating:

Being at least twenty years before his generation, and having views as much above those of the careful traffickers of Amherstburg, as the heaven is above the earth, the excellent captain was totally misunderstood, and well abused, for bringing them customers forsooth.<sup>15</sup>

The area of western New York State, with its rapidly changing economic status and potentially explosive religious volatility, must have appealed to his evangelical instincts. In addition, his love for children made a career in education a likely choice. In his *Emigrant's Guide*, Stuart had written appreciatively about the American churches and their activities among the settlers in Canada West.<sup>16</sup> It cannot be documented how Stuart came to his position as principal of the Utica Academy, but it could have been the result of his contacts with American ministers in Canada, as detailed by Bigsby.

The Utica Academy was founded in 1814. Between the time of its founding and Stuart's arrival in Utica in 1822, the region had experienced a rapid population growth from 1,000 to 4,000 people. The final completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 only added to the increase in population and in economic development. The population would double over the next decade, as Utica became a distribution center for farm produce and a center for the manufacturing of cotton and wool.<sup>17</sup> It is within the light of this rapid expansion that the religious activity in the region is understandable. The population growth brought about by many people moving there from New England brought with them many different denominations and much competition. The churches experienced various religious revivals, which must be seen as more than simply efforts to recruit new members. Following the War of 1812, there was much economic instability, which produced some of the spirit of revival. On the other hand, there

was the optimism of the opening of the Erie Canal and the promise of economic expansion. By the early 1820s, there were various Sunday school campaigns under way to counter the emerging materialism. Other campaigns were enacted to distribute Bibles, encourage temperance, and enforce the Sabbath.<sup>18</sup> During this period, western New York played host as the center of the Second Great Awakening.

Charles Stuart became actively involved in all of these activities, becoming a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Utica and a licensed preacher in the Presbyterian denomination. Denominational loyalties, however, mattered little to Stuart who believed in "...the liberty of the Gospel, in allowing every man the undisturbed possession of his own conscience."<sup>19</sup> This was also a commonly-held belief of those influenced by the Second Great Awakening. In the mid-1820s, Stuart was commissioned by the Bible Society of Oneida, and at his own expense traveled the county on foot, ascertaining the numbers of families who needed Bibles. Through his travels around the county, Stuart developed a reputation as someone who was "eminently pious, actively benevolent, unsurpassingly kind, [but] rigidly austere." People were struck by his piety, commenting, "It seemed as if all that he did was done...under the Great Task Master's Eye." The residents of Oneida County also couldn't help but noticing the way in which Stuart dressed. He was always seen wearing a "Scotch plaid frock, with a cape reaching nearly to his elbows." To argue that he was "wildly eccentric...is to give after all, but a faint idea of what the man really was." As Stuart traveled around the countryside, "with stalwart stride...his quaint garb, his sun-browned face and gentle mien drew every eye."<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the distribution of Bibles, Stuart became the superintendent of his church's Sunday school. His roles at both the Utica Academy and the Sunday school were intertwined. He is said to have been the first teacher in the United States to introduce hymn singing in school.<sup>21</sup> Whether or not this is true can not be determined, but his strong evangelical and devotional style was certainly evidenced. As one former student recalled:

Ah, my comrades, can you ever forget how those walls re-echoed the grand old tune of Rochester? Do you not again hear these words '*Amazing pity! grace unknown! and love beyond degree!*' Do you not even now see the noble form of our venerated friend, with hands meekly folded on the breast, in his customary attitude of prayer? Do you not again hear those pleading tones for mercy, as with rapt irradiate gaze, he seemed to behold the mercy seat?<sup>22</sup>

If the adults in the Utica area were captivated by the eccentricities of the man, his students were no less taken by him. His rooms at the academy were as austere as "the cell of anchorite," with fresh flowers serving as the only decoration. Stuart used a pallet of straw as a bed but in summer months regularly slept outside. He began each day by deluging himself with water both "externally and internally" and would then walk four to five miles away to a farmhouse where he would eat a breakfast of bread and milk. His young students saw these things as the natural outcome of his military experience. While many people thought of him as fanatical, no one denied his sincerity. In fact, his orderliness and asceticism could be seen in the curriculum of the school.<sup>23</sup>

What becomes obvious in the recollections offered by Stuart's former students, is that they loved the man for both his piety and his unique personality. He was described not only as a teacher who instructed and occasionally punished them, but also as a playmate, "the willing partner of all their joys and sorrows, and

of their sports as well.” Following breakfast, he would return to the school and engage the students in an hour of “hilarious mirth” before classes, “in which there was no sport too boisterous for him to engage in.... How they would flock around him! How they clung to him!” remembered one former student. On Saturdays, he would engage the students in “mimic warfare” on the school’s common, even playing his French horn for effect.<sup>24</sup> The students at the Utica Academy were all boys, but he also formed and ran a society to instruct local girls in the Scriptures and in the “duties of practical goodness.” The girls’ instruction was strongly religious, just as in the academy, with an emphasis on 100 questions and answers taken from the pages of scripture. Each week a medal was given to the student who demonstrated the best performance. The girls, too, were able to see Stuart’s lighter side. During holidays he would take them on strolls in the country, often entertaining them with musical performances and giving them candy and nuts.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of good relationships with the young people, the years between 1822 and 1825 found Charles Stuart experiencing inner torment. Toward the end of his years, Stuart would reminisce that this was “one of the most trying times of my life.” This is confirmed by his students, who, while loving him, also witnessed a man in conflict. One of his students remembers him as:

...a peculiar mixture of the severe and the playful; tremendous in his wrath, and hilarious in his relaxed moods; with a most attractive smile and a thunderous volcanic frown, in which there seemed to be a struggle to put down some violent passion.<sup>26</sup>

His move from the remoteness of Canada to Utica did not cure him of his inner struggles. With so little information available, it is impossible to get a clear picture as to his psychological makeup. The picture that emerges, however, based



largely on the few things that are recorded as well as his military service, is of a man whose religion shaped much of his life and caused him to struggle. His self-inflicted asceticism affected both his interactions with women as well as his physical appearance. It is not possible to accurately conclude whether or not Charles Stuart may have been manic-depressive, a homosexual tormented by puritanical guilt or afflicted by some other condition. What can be known, however, is that the various roles he assumed throughout his life functioned for him as a kind of therapy. This is perhaps best seen in the light of his relationship with Theodore Weld.

It was in the spring of 1825 that Charles Stuart was introduced to Theodore Weld. What makes this meeting significant is that Theodore Weld, under the influence and encouragement of Charles Stuart, would go on to become one of the greatest abolitionists in American history. Stuart had become friends of the Weld family and first met Theodore in the home of his uncle, Erastus Clark. The earliest surviving letter Stuart wrote to a fifteen-year-old Theodore reveals Stuart's affection for the boy and his desire to see the relationship develop. It also demonstrates that his relationship with the Weld family was already firmly in place. Weld's Uncle Erastus was one of the founders of Hamilton College, where Theodore was studying. Weld had responded to family pressure to follow in his father's footsteps and become a minister.

Theodore's Aunt Sophia had been telling Theodore stories about a family friend named Charles Stuart. She warned him that, "in looks, dress, and manners, in fact in his whole air of being," Stuart was a bit peculiar. She admitted that people often stared at him and some thought him to be a lunatic, even though she



believed him to be the most saintly man she had ever known.<sup>27</sup> At Sophia's insistence, Stuart visited Weld at Hamilton College. According to Robert Abzug:

Theodore answered the door and was confronted by the outstretched arms of a sweet-faced man sporting a scotch-plaid frock and elbow length cape. They shook with both hands and sat down to talk for the rest of the day and night.<sup>28</sup>

Years later when Theodore Weld was writing to his future wife, Angelina Grimké, he recalled his love for and relationship with Charles Stuart.

When God granted me so rich a blessing as Charles Stuart, I was yet (in years) in my boyhood tho of the stature and maturity of a man. His hold upon my heart went to the foundations of my *whole* nature. Many a time I have wept on his neck from *very love to him* and yet at those very times I have felt in my inmost soul that there remained other intense necessities of my compound *human* nature untouched by the ministrations of his love and communion and panting for *congenial* affiliation.<sup>29</sup>

Just as with Stuart's students at the Utica Academy, to a young Weld, Charles Stuart was an intriguing figure, not only because of his exemplary piety but because of his adventuresome life. Abzug comments that, "This boy from a small town in Connecticut, one who thirsted for adventure, must have gaped as his new friend told of his life spread over three continents." Their friendship would become so close that Abzug says, "...in all but the sexual sense, Theodore and Charles became the most intimate of lovers."<sup>30</sup>

Charles Stuart writing to Theodore Weld in 1826 suggests that, while they are apart...

If agreeable to you, let *Sun-rise* be our time of heart meeting. This will probably approximate us as much in *time* as may be practicable amidst the diversity of hours, of light and darkness, which over spreads society; and it is not to be the formal act of retiring or bending the knee that we wish to resort; but to the spontaneous Swell mutually, of sacred and kindred [?] feeling,

seeking to bear each other and those we love to the footstool of the glorious Majesty!<sup>31</sup>

While this type of expression may seem out of place to today's reader, Robert Abzug argues that it was perfectly acceptable for the times. "The age allowed men to prize such relationships without guilt, perhaps because the taboos against homosexuality, at least for the pious Christian, were so clearly drawn. Even frankly physical attraction could be rejoiced in freely.... Weld and Stuart's passions were less physical, more a meeting of Christian souls."<sup>32</sup>

In 1825, Theodore Weld's Uncle Erastus Clark died. Until this time, he had been financially responsible for Theodore's education at Hamilton College. Charles Stuart eagerly stepped in and assumed this responsibility, further deepening their friendship. Stuart wrote to Weld saying:

Perhaps the loss of your friend [uncle] might impede your studies. If so, I want you to permit me to remove this impediment; and here, with all that confidence which friendship requires, and without which I cannot live, trusting soon to hear from you, I shall merely add that truly in love, I trust in Christian love, I am your  
Charles Stuart<sup>33</sup>

It is also clear from such an arrangement that Stuart was to benefit from this gesture as much as did Theodore. Various letters Stuart wrote to Weld confirms this.

You have called me your friend; and reluctant as I am to attach any meaning that I could value to that word, because I find it almost universally destitute of all such meaning; yet I have not held it destitute of a meaning suited to my heart with you - and I want you to evince to me that this feeling is deeply reciprocal.... The dream of friendship, that shall never die, nay, I wrong it - that shall grow with brightening life forever, has risen in my soul in relation to you.<sup>34</sup>

Toward the end of 1825, the residents of Utica became aware of a religious revival that was gathering momentum in western New York State. Charles Grandison Finney, a former lawyer who had been ordained as an evangelist by the Presbyterian Church, was making his presence known. His strong, flamboyant style of oratory coupled with his common sense approach was a welcomed contrast to the staid, intellectual style of early nineteenth-century Presbyterianism. Finney's "meetings" were drawing large, enthusiastic crowds and resulting in many new commitments to Christ. Charles Stuart's minister at the First Presbyterian Church of Utica describes the manner in which Finney's visit had been arranged, with several local citizens returning from a Finney meeting, "weeping over the state of the church at home and anxious that something should be done."<sup>35</sup> In understanding why this type of evangelicalism was appealing to Stuart, Anne Loveland argues that this type of religious experience crystallized certain vague notions about sin and responsibility and compelling people into an active benevolence.<sup>36</sup>

Charles Finney arrived in Utica in February of 1825, and his "anxious meetings" were viewed with skepticism by local clergy who criticized the meeting's orchestration as manipulation, where assistant evangelists would move through the quiet, darkened hall and whisper in individual's ears, "Do you love God?" However controversial his methods seemed to some, Finney's revivals could be judged an "evident and wonderful success," especially among the students at nearby Hamilton College. In the weeks following Finney's appearance, the local Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational

churches found themselves receiving an estimated total of 500 converts and a “fervent spirit of prayer” among those who were already members.<sup>37</sup>

Among Finney’s most prominent converts, according to his own memoirs, was Theodore Weld, who came from a prominent family and had been a critic of Finney’s revival. The two had even argued publicly. This experience, perhaps motivated out of guilt, caused Weld to spend an agonizing night of soul-searching. At Finney’s meeting the following night, Weld stood up and made a “very humble, earnest, broken-hearted confession.” According to Finney’s memoirs, this confession by Weld, who had previously attacked him, removed a “stumbling-block [Weld had] cast before the people.”<sup>38</sup> That Theodore Weld was sixteen years old at the time raises the question as to the true nature of his influence and the importance of his conversion to Finney’s ministry. While being sixteen in the 1820s carried with it many of the responsibilities of adulthood, the significance of Weld’s conversion to Finney’s ministry is questionable. Perhaps more accurately, it was important to Finney, at least locally, because Weld was from a prominent family, and because of who Weld went on to become in the antislavery movement.

While Theodore Weld’s experience under Finney can be termed a “conversion,” the same does not apply to Charles Stuart. Yet, given the closeness between Stuart and Weld, the enthusiasm Weld experienced must have been felt by Stuart. Whitney Cross explains this by saying:

Both [Stuart and Weld] were accomplished religious activists before 1826, at a time when Finney himself had shown no such tendency. But both luxuriated in new conversions under his guidance and gained new methods and novel heights of moral tension from the experience.<sup>39</sup>

It is easy to understand how excited Charles Stuart must have become as a result of Finney's visit and Weld's conversion. Stuart had the opportunity to join Finney's "holy band," a group of enthusiastic followers and preachers who continued the revival in towns smaller than Finney himself would visit. Just a few years before, Stuart had been something of a misfit, wandering the countryside, alone, distributing Bibles. Now, as a member of the "holy band," he was involved in a successful movement and discovering his public speaking abilities.

Like Stuart, Theodore Weld also became a member of the "holy band" and began travelling and speaking as a surrogate of Finney's. This common pursuit was also a time of deepening the bonds already established between Stuart and Weld. The two were, however, separated by their various independent travels. Theodore Weld was the kind of person who enjoyed the fast-paced life of action as opposed to the classroom. The travel demands placed on Weld, while trying to keep up his studies at Hamilton College, produced a fatigue that resulted in his losing his voice. Weld was forced to take time off and recuperate.

Following his recuperation and under the guidance of Stuart, Theodore Weld enrolled at the Oneida Institute in Whitesboro, a manual labor college founded by wealthy New York City merchants, Arthur and Lewis Tappan. George Washington Gale served as the school's first president. For his part, Charles Stuart continued his travelling, distributing Bibles, working to promote "Bar less taverns"<sup>40</sup> and the temperance movement and working for Finney. At times, Stuart seemed particularly rejuvenated by working directly with Finney. He wrote to Weld, saying:

I lately had the inestimable privilege of spending ten days with him; and I intend almost immediately to return and spend two or three months under his ministry. With what a glorious spirit has God endowed him - and oh, what a peculiarly solemn responsibility is incurred by those alike who attend his ministry, and by those who having it within their reach, reject or oppose it.<sup>41</sup>

At the Oneida Institute, Theodore Weld enjoyed the hard physical work, which was fundamental to the manual labor philosophy, and was a natural leader among the student body. Weld's potential as a leader did not go unnoticed by the New York-based evangelicals, including the Tappan brothers. He was often called on by Gale to help raise funds for the school and to promote the work of the Manual Labor Society by travelling and lecturing. In addition, he was frequently asked by Finney to help with his various revivals. While Weld's talents were being put to good use by many evangelical leaders, it was to Charles Stuart that he owed a particular allegiance. Whitney Cross argues that, "If [Weld] must be labeled a disciple, Charles Stuart was the man to whom he bore virtually exclusive apostleship."<sup>42</sup>

The closeness of Charles Stuart and Theodore Weld is interesting and worth exploring. The surviving letters written by Stuart to Weld are laced with his expressed affection for the younger man. Stuart's letters often began, "My beloved Theodore," and the expressions of love for him were uninhibited and viewed the relationship as dearer "than any ties of blood could make."<sup>43</sup> Stuart would express his affection in ways like, "my soul pants to embrace you.... Often my beloved Theodore, does my soul turn to you and contemplate you with solemn affection; sometimes it trembles for you," and "If agreeable to you, let Sun-rise be our time of heart meeting. This will probably approximate us as much in time as

may be practicable.”<sup>44</sup> It would be far too easy to conclude that Stuart was repressing homosexual feelings for the younger Weld.

Perhaps a more likely explanation for what Whitney Cross describes as the “extravagantly pious language of the day,” which he revealed in his letters, would be the possible explanation that Stuart, due to his puritanical orientation, may in fact have been repressing his heterosexual feelings and using Theodore as an outlet.<sup>45</sup> The repression of such feelings was expressed in his discomfort at the necklines of the women on the Canadian frontier. In addition, there is evidence of an awkward relationship he carried on with Theodore Weld’s sister, Cornelia, to whom he proposed. In May of 1828, Cornelia was considering his proposal of marriage, but he was not hopeful as to her decision. Stuart wrote to Weld, saying:

I have spoken to Cornelia, and she heard me with all the gentle dignity of her noble mind. She has not replied definitely. But her hesitation I believe, proceeds not from any uncertainty in her own feelings, for these I am persuaded are an affectionate tho’ decided negative; but because she wishes to give the matter all that prayerful consideration which may make the path of duty clear, and secure her from all precipitancy. On these grounds she pauses, and I admire the candour, meekness and the wisdom which she displays. I believe that she has committed her way to the Lord and that He will guide her, and as I feel that she is in His hands and is subject to no other influence that control her, I trust I shall be enabled to rejoice in her decision whatever it may be. For She will decide entirely for herself, under God, consulting alike her happiness and duty; and surely I shall rejoicing her happiness - yes and I will rejoice, as the Lord may help me.<sup>46</sup>

While Stuart may have been trying to convince Theodore and himself that he would be able to rejoice whatever her decision, it is clear that this was a time of emotional uncertainty for him. He waited for Cornelia’s decision, uncertain of his own future. The continuation of the May 19 letter reveals his inner struggle.



Pray for me, my beloved Theodore. I feel my Soul at once strengthen'd and shaken. At times its baseness and feebleness rises with such giant form before me, that I abhor myself for the effort to involve another in its fortunes; but again I am persuaded that grace would be given me to prove a holy, tender, wise, and faithful friend and servant, and my spirit rejoices in the pursuit, however hopeless. But why hopeless? Or am I such at love as to have joy in hope, except it involve my own selfishness? I endeavour not to be so, and I bless the Lord with all my soul that our dear Cornelia's decision will express to me at once His Holy will, and under Him, secure in this particular her own happiness; and if I be left to mourn, O Theodore, there is a Comforter, and He has manifested Himself to me.<sup>47</sup>

When Cornelia did reject Stuart's proposal to marry him, he responded to the news the way he earlier predicted. Hoping that she would be "finally freed from the pain which I have caused her," Stuart nonetheless expressed a sense of relief from the burden his heart had "so stupidly fabricated for itself."<sup>48</sup> The pain Stuart had from this sense of rejection made him feel he could no longer reside in the area. Stuart spent the winter in New York City and then, in the spring of 1829, spent three months working again for Finney. Throughout this period in Stuart's life, the issue of slavery seemed curiously remote for a man who had helped fugitive slaves in Canada. At this particular period, Stuart also seemed unaware of the campaign against slavery already underway in Britain. As he prepared to sail for Ireland, Stuart wrote to Weld, never mentioning the problems of oppressive poverty and revolution facing Ireland. Instead, he was preoccupied with other issues. He wrote, "Pray for me beloved Theodore. I see before me frowning on the pleasant field of the green island, the lures of pride, and indolence, and selfishness, of slavish fear and crazy idolatry."<sup>49</sup> Stuart added a postscript to his letter, saying, "In your report [to me], I want you to be particular about yourself, your experience, your wants, your projects, your ministry, etc."<sup>50</sup>



As Charles Stuart prepared to leave for Britain, it was this continued correspondence that eventually would become important to the antislavery campaign of the nineteenth century.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, pp. 281-284.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- <sup>3</sup> T.R. Millman, *Jacob Mountain: First Lord Bishop of Quebec*, Toronto, 1947, pp. 277-280.
- <sup>4</sup> Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, pp. 115-16, 118.
- <sup>5</sup> Edward A. Talbot, *Five Years Residence in the Canadas*, London, 1824, I, vi.
- <sup>6</sup> Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, pp. 122-127.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122-127.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Fred Landon, "Captain Charles Stuart, Abolitionist," *Western Ontario History Nuggets*, London, Ontario, 24, 1956, p. 2.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>12</sup> Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, pp. 240-46, 257-78.
- <sup>13</sup> Jonathan J. Bigsby, *The shoe and canoe, or Pictures of Travel in the Canadas*, 2 vols., London, 1850, pp. 263-66.
- <sup>14</sup> Landon, "Captain Charles Stuart: A Figure of Importance in Struggle over Slavery," *Amherstburg Echo*, September 3, 1953.
- <sup>15</sup> Bigsby, *Shoe and canoe*, I, p. 264.
- <sup>16</sup> Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, pp. 116, 229.
- <sup>17</sup> Pomroy Jones, *Annals of Oneida County*, Rome, NY, 1851, pp. 545, 566.
- <sup>18</sup> Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District, The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850*, New York, 1965, pp. 10-13, 126-137.
- <sup>19</sup> Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, p. 115.
- <sup>20</sup> Moses Mears Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions*, Utica, NY, 1877, pp. 543-44.
- <sup>21</sup> *A Memorial of the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Founding of the Sunday school of the First Presbyterian Church, Utica, N.Y.*, Utica, NY, 1867, p. 36.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- <sup>23</sup> *A Memorial of the Semi-Centennial...*, p. 117; Bagg, *Pioneers of Utica*, p. 544.

- <sup>24</sup> *A Memorial of the Semi-Centennial...*, pp. 36, 117; Bagg, *Pioneers of Utica*, p. 544.
- <sup>25</sup> *A Memorial of the Semi-Centennial*, pp., 212-13.
- <sup>26</sup> Stuart to Charles Stuart Weld, Angelina and Sarah Grimké, October 15, 1852, Weld Papers; Bagg, *Pioneers of Utica*, p. 543.
- <sup>27</sup> Robert H. Abzug, *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform*, Oxford, 1980, p. 31.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> Theodore Weld to Angelina Grimké, February 18, 1838, Weld Papers.
- <sup>30</sup> Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, pp. 32-33.
- <sup>31</sup> Stuart to Weld, January 10, 1826, Weld Papers.
- <sup>32</sup> Abzug, *Passionate Liberator*, p. 33.
- <sup>33</sup> Stuart to Weld, November 16, 1825, Weld Papers.
- <sup>34</sup> Stuart to Weld, May 10, 1825; November 16; December 17; January 10, 1826, Weld Papers.
- <sup>35</sup> Account of Utica Revival by Mr. Aikin, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, in *A Narrative of the Revival of Religion in the County of Oneida, Particularly in the Bounds of the Presbytery of Oneida in the Year 1826*, Utica, NY, 1826, pp. 23-25. While the name "Aikin" appears on the document, the records of the First Presbyterian Church of Utica list the pastor's name as "Aiken."
- <sup>36</sup> Anne C. Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation,'" *Journal of Southern History*, vol. XXXII, February-November, 1966, p. 178.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 37, 66-88.
- <sup>38</sup> Charles Grandison Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles Grandison Finney*, New York, 1876, pp. 185-88.
- <sup>39</sup> Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850*, Ithaca, NY 1950, p. 218.
- <sup>40</sup> Stuart to Weld, May 19, 1828, Weld Papers.
- <sup>41</sup> Stuart to Weld, April 30, 1829, Weld Papers.
- <sup>42</sup> Cross, *Burned-over District*, p. 219
- <sup>43</sup> Stuart to Weld, May 19, 1828, Weld Papers.
- <sup>44</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 8, 1828, January 10, 1826, Weld Papers.
- <sup>45</sup> Cross, *Burned-over District*, p. 219.
- <sup>46</sup> Stuart to Weld, May 19, 1828, Weld Papers.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Stuart to Weld, October 7, 1828, Weld Papers.

<sup>49</sup> Stuart to Weld, August [?] 1829, Weld Papers.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

### CHAPTER 3

#### CHARLES STUART: ABOLITIONIST

Until the 1820s, British abolitionists were concerned with fighting slavery, primarily through parliamentary channels. Until then, most efforts concentrated upon improving the conditions of slaves and fostering the idea of a gradual emancipation. The name of the national abolition society reflected these aims, "The Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery." Known simply as the Anti-Slavery Society, it pursued more cautious methods of attempting to influence government through lobbying and publishing articles in its own publication, *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, as well as in publications that had no connection to West India interests. The society had provincial auxiliaries, but its main function was to dispatch delegates to an annual meeting in London, not to undertake local agitation.<sup>1</sup>

Significant changes would take place in the goals of the abolitionists in the 1830s, however. James Walvin sees the parliamentary antislavery activity of the 1820s as an important period of preparation. A "Prodigious volume" of information was being published to provide more sophisticated awareness of slavery than ever before. As a result, he argues, the eventual flood of petitions to Parliament at the end of the decade was evidence of "a genuine and massive popular support" for abolition. The Emancipation Act of 1833 may have been the

work of a reformed Parliament based on a broad middle-class franchise, but the pressure on politicians came from a much more popularly based movement. The evidence for mass involvement lies not only in large numbers of signatures on petitions but in the large crowds that were overflowing the antislavery meetings. Walvin emphasizes how widespread the movement was, but even, while insisting on its populist base, he implies a good deal of metropolitan influence in the provinces. In the late 1820s, the wide distribution of the of the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* provided "information, guidance, and direction to the national cause." And in the decisive years after 1830, the eventually autonomous Agency Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society divided the country into lecture circuits that "attracted large crowds and encouraged local associations and publications." The same metropolitan organization, Walvin suggests, had a major influence on the abandonment of gradualism in favor of immediatism.<sup>2</sup>

With the growing trend toward immediatism, the few historians who mention Charles Stuart's early antislavery activity have wrongly mentioned that he was already an abolitionist.<sup>3</sup> Stuart himself would write in 1833 that, in 1829, he had no knowledge of the antislavery movement. Despite his commitment to reform causes in New York, he had not heard of any American abolitionists. Despite his personal involvement in assisting freed blacks in Canada, Stuart was not yet hostile to the American Colonization Society, which was seen by some as a legitimate antislavery effort, the goal of which was to send freed slaves to Liberia. For some months, Stuart's letters to Theodore Weld from Britain included no mention of slavery, even though they mentioned other social issues such as temperance. It wasn't until March of 1831 that Stuart would mention

slavery to Weld. In mid-1829, Charles Stuart left the United States and sailed for Britain. This was at a time when the first steps toward immediatism in Britain had been taken.

On June 5, 1829, Otway Cave introduced a resolution in the House of Commons, arguing that it was the House's duty to "enact measures protecting all British subjects from here on born in the West Indies from violations of their human rights as human beings."<sup>4</sup> Although the resolution had little effect, it did mark the beginning of demands that would only become more vocal and radical. At the same time, petitions were being widely circulated outside of London. While Charles Stuart's early impressions are not recorded, he must have sensed the growing sentiment toward immediatism as soon as he reached Britain. With the exception of a brief visit to Scotland, Stuart was the house guest of William and Mary Blair at Cotham Lodge in Bristol. William Blair had been a civil servant in India during much of Stuart's time there and had later spent time in the Cape Colony, where firsthand exposure to slavery reinforced his antislavery leanings. When Stuart arrived, Blair was involved in antislavery lecturing throughout Britain, and it is no doubt there, in that environment, that Charles Stuart's antislavery leanings toward immediatism began to develop.

At the annual meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society held in Freemason's Hall in May of 1830, the aging William Wilberforce was in attendance, but his role as the Parliamentary leader of the antislavery movement, by this stage, was greatly diminished. Also in attendance was Thomas Buxton, who was seen as the one to carry the mantle of Wilberforce. When Buxton spoke, he revealed gradualist attitudes that were not shared by the majority of the Anti-Slavery



Society. He argued that adult slaves, because of their condition, were not fit for immediate emancipation. The same could not be said for their children, whom Buxton believed still had time how to learn how to be productive citizens. Buxton then went on to present a resolution which angered many in attendance because of its lack of clarity. The resolution spoke of leaving "no proper and practical means unattempted for effecting, at the earliest period, its [slavery's] entire abolition throughout British dominions."<sup>5</sup> It was at this point that Henry Pownall, a magistrate from Middlesex, stood up in a side gallery made a short speech, followed by an amendment, "That from and after 1st of January, 1830, every child born within the king's dominion shall be free." According to the memoirs of Joseph Sturge, a Birmingham Quaker, "the effect was electrical."<sup>6</sup> Pownall's speech was greeted by so much applause that those on the platform had difficulty regaining control of the meeting. At least one member on the platform, Thomas Denman, recognized the growing trend among the assembled abolitionists and congratulated the meeting:

...because on all former occasions the Society had run before the public, and had in some degree been called upon to excite it...but in this instance the public had shown it would take the matter into its own hands, and had thus given the society a warning by which he was sure it would endeavor to profit.<sup>7</sup>

The rest of the antislavery establishment, however, did not share Denman's enthusiasm for the growing trend in antislavery thinking. In Henry Richard's *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge*, it is argued that the incident that occurred at Freemason's Hall signaled the beginning of an antagonism and eventual separation between the two parties. The separation came in the formation of the Agency Committee, a committee in which Charles Stuart would play a key role.



The rising tide of antislavery petitions to the House of Commons is an indication of the growing concern people had over the issue of slavery. From a handful of petitions in 1829 to dozens in the first half of 1830, the number swelled into the thousands later that year. Also, the word “immediately” began to be used more often, although the petitioners stopped short of real immediatism. For example, a petition from Huddersfield argued that the House of Commons should take steps “for effecting the immediate abolition of slavery” but went on to qualify this demand with the familiar request “that Government will specify an early period when the children of the slaves shall be free.” By the last two months of 1830, the tone of the petitions was dramatically different, demanding abolition “at once and forever.” To a large extent, these demands were creating their own momentum. At an antislavery meeting in Edinburgh in October of 1830, great publicity was created when an immediatist resolution led to the withdrawal of some of the more prominent and leading citizens, including the Lord Provost. The result was that a second meeting attracted an even larger audience and created an enthusiasm resulting in 22,000 people signing their signatures to a petition demanding immediate abolition.<sup>8</sup>

The reason for the increase in demands for immediate abolition can be credited to the influence of newspapers, both national and local, which published accounts of antislavery meetings. There was, however, growing cooperation and organisation among abolitionists. It was in this environment that Charles Stuart, with his willingness to travel and his revivalist training under Charles Finney, found himself uniquely qualified to take a lead role in these antislavery activities. As unsubstantial and sketchy as the details of his conversion to abolitionism may

be, from the time of Pownall's amendment, Stuart's involvement was decisive and unwavering. From his home base in Bristol, Stuart wrote his first antislavery pamphlet, *Petitions Respecting Negro Slavery*, in which he attacked not the opinions of gradualists like Buxton, but the Pownall resolutions, which he didn't think went far enough. In writing this pamphlet, Charles Stuart was on the cutting edge of a new radicalism that was emerging in the antislavery movement. Stuart's pamphlet went directly to the core issues. He argued:

Ought the friends of lawful liberty, to petition for the complete and immediate emancipation of the oppressed Negroes, that they may at once be raised from slaves into subjects; and while they share in all the wise and wholesome restraints of law, may partake with us in the privileges and blessings - or, ought they to insert in their petitions, any subordinate clause, such as, that the deplorably defective propositions of Mr. Canning's administration be carried into effect - and, that the children born after a certain date, shall remain free?...They ought to petition for *complete and immediate* emancipation of the Negroes, in the above sense.

A key to Stuart's argument was the evangelical concept of sin, with which he had been familiar since his youth. He argued his objection to the resolution of 1830, stating, "because the more we move the filthiness and outward obnoxiousness of sin, without ceasing from sinning, the more we cloak the horrors of our guilt, and the greater is our danger of continuing at peace in its vile embraces." Stuart's argument also accepted the assumption that the public was ready for strong moral leadership on the subject. Stuart was convinced that petitioning for emancipation of the slave's children would assure that their parents would remain slaves for years to come. He argued, "But this is a perfectly gratuitous assumption. All that is wanting is, the union of the nation; and what is

to prevent the union of the nation? what so likely as some half-way measures, that may afford to indolence and selfishness, a convenient excuses.”<sup>9</sup>

It appeared that the nation was in need of a campaign to arouse the public in favor of the immediatist position, and it was just such a campaign that Charles Stuart and his associates organized. These activities have widely been overlooked. Instead, much attention is often given to the organization of the Agency Committee one year later as the beginning of a new style of antislavery campaigning and using new methods, but rather it was the implementation of proven methods applied to a new situation.

Two things led to the foundation of the Agency Committee. The first was a series of discussions within the London-based Anti-Slavery Society, concerning the use of agitation within the provinces. The second was actual experimentation with local agitation by lecturers, which resembled the techniques eventually used by the Agency Committee. The instigator of the plan to use itinerant agents was none other than Stuart's good friend, William Blair. While Blair himself was not a member of the Anti-Slavery Society, his offer to visit and lecture had sparked the discussion. In a July letter from Blair to the Committee, he urged, “the engaging of agents to itinerate for the purpose of holding public meetings and procuring petitions for Parliament.” It was this demand that produced a resolution to hire agents who could be sent into the field on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>10</sup>

In the late summer of 1830, Charles Stuart traveled to Ireland, presumably to work on antislavery efforts. While there is no official record of his reasons for making the trip, his strong commitment to antislavery efforts makes a good case that it was antislavery business. Additionally, Stuart's host in Ireland was Dr.

Charles Orpen, who, like William Blair, was active in antislavery efforts. William Blair involved himself in speaking out against slavery and calling for immediate emancipation in his home region of the West Country. Blair went so far as to advocate, if the petitions to Parliament failed, a boycott of slave-grown sugar.<sup>11</sup>

The antislavery environment in which Charles Stuart operated, both in England and in Ireland, was strongly evangelical. Given Stuart's upbringing, this should not come as a surprise. It is, however, important to understand that, in both England and Ireland, this evangelical zeal found a home in activities that were a direct result of a Quaker foundation. During this formative period in Stuart's antislavery thought, he was to gain an appreciation for the Quaker contribution to the abolitionist movement. This would pave the way for his eventual friendships with English Quakers like James Cropper and Joseph Sturge. But it was in Ireland that Stuart was first confronted with Quaker influence.

The Quakers had been involved in antislavery efforts long before others joined the cause.<sup>12</sup> Since the late eighteenth century, Irish Quakers had been stressing boycotts of slave-grown produce. While they demonstrated a strong resolve to end slavery, the Irish Quakers, like virtually all British and Irish abolitionists at this time, advocated gradual emancipation. The antislavery activists in Ireland appointed a non-Quaker, Mrs. Charles Orpen of Dublin, as the district treasurer in Ireland for the Birmingham Female Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves. Two years later, she became the foundation secretary of the Dublin Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, which was similar to a society in Bristol, both of which were in regular correspondence with the Birmingham society, whose rules

and regulations they adopted. Mrs. Orpen was the wife of Dr. Charles Orpen, Stuart's hosts on his visit to Ireland.<sup>13</sup>

While the Dublin Ladies Anti-Slavery Society was not a "Quaker" organization, it continued to develop the Quaker emphasis on boycotting slave produce, issuing a list of grocers who only dealt in East Indian sugar. In July of 1829, Protestant men from the same middle-class circles, including Mrs. Orpen's husband Dr. Charles Orpen, founded the Dublin Negro's Friend Society. This society, like its female counterpart, had close links with abolitionists in Birmingham. However, it quickly became more aggressive in its call for immediate antislavery attitudes than its Quaker forerunners. While in its first year it did not advocate immediatism, one year later, by the time both Stuart and Blair had committed to such a position through their writings, the Society was strongly in the immediatist camp. Blair would even write that it was because of frustration with other antislavery groups' gradualist leanings that his group had been formed.<sup>14</sup>

It is easy to understand Charles Stuart's attraction to antislavery work in Ireland, given the people who led the cause there. Four members of the Board of Managers of the Negro's Friend Society were also members of the Hibernian Bible Society. The two associations held their meetings on successive days to facilitate attendance by what was a largely common membership. The makeup of this group was exclusively mainstream Protestant, with the exception of one Quaker, making it strongly anti-Catholic in its leanings. Stuart must have found the company of such like-minded individuals very much to his liking.<sup>15</sup> One of the more prominent members was Major Henry Sirr, the father-in-law of Dr.

Charles Orpen. Sirr was especially disliked among Dublin Catholics because of his role in the suppression of the United Irishmen around the turn of the century. That the society insisted that "Slavery is a Transgression of Divine Law" would have been particularly appealing to Stuart. In addition, the society tended toward policies that were akin to Stuart's international understanding of the slavery issue. The society was determined not to limit its activity to opposing slavery "in the British colonies only," but rather it emphasized "looking at Slavery as a SIN, where ever it exists, and as such, protesting and in the Lord's name, declaring war against it, *over the whole Globe*." The society also looked beyond the "moral and religious, and social, and political improvement of the liberated Negroes."<sup>16</sup> Given Stuart's history of working with the free blacks in Amherstburg, Canada, this kind of effort was one in which he would have been naturally supportive. Also, the Quaker practice of boycotting slave-grown produce was something Stuart not only embraced but would follow throughout his life.

In addition to gaining much from the abolitionists in Dublin, Charles Stuart contributed much. The pamphlet he published in Bristol, *Petitions Respecting Negro Slavery*, was publicly endorsed by the Negro's Friend Society as representing its views against those of London which favored freeing children of slaves but fell short on demanding freedom for all slaves. The Dublin society published a new pamphlet, presumably in 1830, entitled, *On the Prospective Emancipation of Slaves' Unborn Children*, in which Stuart developed his antislavery opinions further. The pamphlet represents the classic evangelical preoccupation with slavery as sin. Stuart argued that slavery was founded on the "principle of pirates" and that it was inconsistent with both British and divine law.

Divine law was something that Stuart believed could not be obeyed at random, but something that had to be obeyed in full. Even if an individual...

...foresaw the greatest probability of advantage, by waiving immediate obedience, in favour of some more expedient, though less equitable measure,...God gives us no such liberty. Immediate duty is His holy and gracious requirement. The present moment is all, that God gives to man.<sup>17</sup>

Stuart also argued that slaves were capable of immediate freedom. He used the examples of Negroes in Haiti, Sierra Leone, and drew from his first-hand experience in Canada to argue against the idea that the Negroes were so “irremediably bent” by slavery that they were not capable of the “erect posture of freedom.”<sup>18</sup> In the final few months of 1830, Charles Stuart wrote at least thirteen pamphlets, which were published by the Negro’s Friend Society. Through some of these writings, he would continue to develop the argument that slavery could not be defended by use of the Bible. This theme would emerge in his future writings. Stuart’s *Can West Indian Slavery Be Justified From Scripture?* was soon elaborated as *Is Slavery Defensible From Scripture?* and published in Belfast the following year. Throughout his antislavery career, Charles Stuart would continue to base his understanding of abolitionism on the central argument that there was a difference between plantation slavery and slavery in the Old Testament. This argument, which narrowly defined slavery to plantation slavery, would be important for the future of abolitionism, as within even the ranks of abolitionism slavery would be understood differently.

If there is any significance of Stuart’s period of writing in Ireland, it can be found in the early date at which he was advocating immediatism. While this position appears representative of the antislavery movement in general, it must be



remembered that these arguments were arguments against the official antislavery policy in Britain. While viewed as radicals, the aims of the Anti-Slavery Society were reflected in the organization's full title: The Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions. Howard Temperley says of the organization, that they:

...did not demand the immediate overthrow of slavery, merely the adoption of measures to protect slaves from wanton mistreatment, together with a plan for gradual emancipation leading ultimately to complete freedom. By limiting itself to such proposals it sought to enlist the support not only of radicals but of conservatives and even of the planters themselves.<sup>19</sup>

The kind of immediatism Stuart was championing in 1830 would soon become predominant, but other issues, such as opposing compensation, would never be fully accepted by the British abolition movement. This is in no way, however, to argue that Charles Stuart and the other provincial abolitionists were alone in challenging the traditional antislavery arguments. What it does illustrate is that the grass roots, sawdust trail techniques of Stuart and his associates were already perfected by them and then adopted by the Agency Committee.

Stuart's lecture tours gave him the opportunity to distribute his many antislavery publications that he wrote during his time in Ireland. Posters announcing his meetings were posted in the towns he visited prior to his arrival. Most often, he gave his lectures in Protestant churches, chapels, and meeting halls, and, at each stop, he had in his possession a West Indian slave whip "for everyone, who doubts the cruelties of slavery, to see and examine."<sup>20</sup> In this regard, his training under Charles Finney was paying off. The only real difference between Stuart's antislavery lecture tour and the kinds of revivals he helped



orchestrate in western New York State, was that the attendees were not asked to make a commitment to Christ, but rather to sign an antislavery petition to be forwarded to Parliament. These petitions demanded immediate abolition. In this venture of organizing petitions and gathering signatures, Stuart was successful.

Charles Orpen wrote:

The numerous meetings that he has held, and the deep interest, that has been every where excited...has been already proved in Parliament, by the novel fact, that petitions have been sent from very many places in Ireland, which had never before done so.<sup>21</sup>

The importance of these petitions is underscored by Seymour Drescher, who writes:

In cases of exceptionally numerous petitioners, an MP could also place their number in the parliamentary record. He might also dramatically impress the legislature with the size or weight of the sheets, sewn together like great scrolls. When a number of strong men were required to haul a single petition into Parliament the visual impact of the volume and weight was added to number. When soaring numbers of petitions finally caused the Commons to tabulate officially the weekly flood of signatures...newspapers gave a running account of the number of signatures piling up for each subject. By the 1830s, then, petitions were regarded as an imprecise but none the less tangible indicator of public feeling about social problems. The canvassing, gathering and presentation of these requests for parliamentary action had developed into an elaborate ceremony for the creation and expression of public opinion and became a symbol of the people mobilized. The abolitionist petitions were, in fact, the single most important embodiment of that phenomenon in the fifty years between 1788 and 1838.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note that, at the time when Stuart was gathering petitions throughout Ireland, it was at a time when many Irish citizens were deeply troubled by existing conditions to which Stuart seemed oblivious. The lack of an Irish Parliament and the difficulties between Protestants and Catholics seemingly caused him little effect. It was a time when the leadership of Catholic Ireland

believed they could work within the structures of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Parliament in Westminster had just passed the Catholic Emancipation Act. It is therefore understandable that Stuart makes no reference to Irish political problems at this time. The social conscience of Charles Stuart, however, that was sparked by his deep Christianity was confined to a belief simply in the power of the gospel to liberate the heathens in India or Canada from ignorant depravity and white people in America from their enslavement to sins like drunkenness and a failure to observe the Sabbath. With single-minded zeal, he pursued such aims, and it is therefore consistent that, when slavery became the focus of his enthusiasm, he would champion exclusively the issue of West Indian Slavery over and against other pressing national issues. In the future, he would become sympathetic to Irish suffering, but in the short term his efforts focused strictly on West Indian slavery. This single-minded approach, coupled with his American revivalist experience, made Charles Stuart uniquely qualified as an exponent of the methods that were characteristic of this successful period of antislavery activity.

By 1830, however, few in the antislavery movement had any illusions as to the effects of government policy. Until then, the British Anti-Slavery Committee supported a network of "provincial auxiliaries" which had concentrated their efforts on Parliament. The lack of progress, however, forced them to adopt other measures. For some time, the younger, more radical element within the movement had been arguing for a more aggressive approach. Specifically, they wanted to take the campaign directly to the people rather than to their elected representatives. It was proposed that a group of lecturers be hired to undertake

such an effort. Thomas Buxton and the other conservative members were not opposed to this proposal. In April of 1830, the British Anti-Slavery Society established a small subcommittee, called The Agency Committee. This decision was formalized in June by the London Committee. Although Charles Stuart was still in Ireland, he was nonetheless named as one of the founding members. Howard Temperley describes the role of the Agency Committee and the unique contribution Charles Stuart had to offer.

The Agency Committee...consisted originally of eighteen members. It was supposed to meet daily but in practice this proved too demanding, with the result that most of the administration work developed upon an inner caucus of three members, George Stephen, son of the abolitionist James Stephen, and two Quakers, Joseph and Emmanuel Cooper. The engaged five lecturers, each at a salary of 200 [pounds] a year, and assigned to them specific districts with the responsibility of arousing public opinion there.... The Committee also received the gratuitous services of a number of others, including those of that fervid but somewhat eccentric abolitionist, Captain Charles Stuart, recently returned from the United States where he had been assisting in the revivalist efforts of Charles Finney and his holy band. The methods used by the Committee had, in fact, much in common with those used by religious revivalists. In adapting them to the needs of the antislavery cause, it established a new and highly effective technique later used with even greater effect in the United States. Committee members went from town to town, speaking in public halls and meeting houses and urging their audiences to circulate petitions, thus paving the way for the formation of local auxiliaries.<sup>23</sup>

Howard Temperley is accurate in recognizing the relationship between Charles Stuart's experience and activities and the methods adopted by the Agency Committee. He is less accurate, however, when it comes to the amount of credit Stuart deserves. Temperley makes no mention of Stuart's extensive lecturing activities in Ireland and England during 1830 and 1831. It is also inaccurate to suggest that, after the formation of the Agency Committee, Charles Stuart played

only a part-time role with the suggestion that his services were “gratuitous.” A strong case could be made that, during this time, on either side of the Atlantic, there was perhaps no more full-time abolitionist than Charles Stuart. Stuart used his financial independence and lack of close family ties to travel tirelessly on behalf of the antislavery cause. In fact, for approximately two decades, Charles Stuart lived and breathed nothing but abolitionism.

From its inception, there were tensions between the Agency Committee and the general committee, due partly to ideology and partly to administrative matters. The Agency Committee was also very successful financially, and the parent committee wanted to limit the remuneration of its agents to strictly travelling expenses. The members of the Agency Committee continued taking their message of immediatism to local districts and creating auxiliary agencies. The members were united in their determination to function as an autonomous group. This unity between members of the Agency Committee, however, would not last. In this future division, Charles Stuart would play a crucial role.

Historians generally agree upon the importance of the Agency Committee in helping bring about the Emancipation Act of 1833. This took place by arousing public opinion and applying pressure not only on Westminster but on local candidates for parliamentary elections. Their activities are seen as particularly important for those who believe emancipation was the result of a broadly based political movement, acting within a Christian framework, rather than a result of a pragmatic Parliament coming to terms with the realities of capitalism. This later argument is one suggested by Eric Williams in his once influential book, *Capitalism and Slavery*. Although Williams’ thesis has been cited largely as

being inadequate, yet a corrective to earlier eulogies, some of Charles Stuart's activities and beliefs seem to raise the question of motives for his abolition activities.

One common interest shared by all of the antislavery groups with which Charles Stuart was associated, was the promotion of East Indian products at the expense of slave-grown West Indian products. For many, this was simply an antislavery tactic. But for key individuals, the East Indian connection was more basic. Eric Williams, for example, points to the East India Company investments of Zachary Macaulay, an abolitionist during the 1820s and a prominent member of the Agency Committee. Even more specific, Williams mentions James Cropper as the "greatest importer of East Indian sugar into Liverpool." Williams' conclusion, that the "connection between East Indians and certain abolitionists has not been fully appreciated," could, however, work against him. He could have reinforced his argument by emphasizing a similarly expedient commitment at a humbler level, whether among the Dublin grocers who had long promoted East Indian produce or among the Birmingham female organizers of the national registry for encouraging abstinence from slave-grown sugar. Whatever the motives of the individual organizers of the registry, their plan depended on the availability of free-grown supplies of sugar, which were to be distributed from the London warehouse of John Crisp, a "dealer in tea and East-India sugar only" and who was soon to be the secretary of the Agency Committee.<sup>24</sup>

It is unclear whether William Blair retained an interest in the East India Company he had served so long. In addition, the correspondence of Charles Stuart shows no evidence of any personal holdings of East India Company stock.

C. Duncan Rice makes the case that Stuart was a wealthy man, but a reading of his correspondence draws attention to the fact that, throughout his life, Stuart was very dependent on his military pension.<sup>25</sup> This seems to imply that Charles Stuart would lend credibility to the Williams argument. In addition to his obvious interest in the welfare of the East India Company, Stuart also argued in favor of free over slave labor in his most famous publication, *The West India Question*, by arguing that, under a free system:

The colonies would be safer, less expensive, and more productive; for a free and loyal population fostered by us, would throng their plains, and would be continually extending the mutual demand and supply, by which commerce prospers.<sup>26</sup>

There is no doubt that such economic arguments about slavery were an important part of the whole antislavery environment. Despite Williams' central contention that the West Indian economy was in decline and had been seriously undermined, his point can no longer be held as being "the" explanation. Despite the connection various abolitionists may have had, Stuart notwithstanding, a more critical look at their behavior reveals a more complex motivation than expediency. To limit one's understanding of Charles Stuart to his economic self-interests or his selective humanitarianism is to ignore the evidence of his earlier life and deny the force of other explanations of the antislavery impulse. Charles Stuart embraced the antislavery cause with the zeal of a man who had reached the end of a complex emotional and intellectual struggle. On an intellectual level, Stuart had reached this conclusion before his return to Britain. If slavery was for many of Stuart's contemporaries the embodiment of sin, Stuart himself was the embodiment of the ideology that rejected any compromise with sin. Stuart's attitude had already

been publicized by Elizabeth Heyrick's pamphlet, *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition*, which was known but not universally accepted in abolition circles when Stuart arrived in Britain. Heyrick's central theme was the supremacy of individual conscience over social and political institutions and a belief that gradualism was a satanic plot to designed to induce gradual indifference.<sup>27</sup> David Brion Davis argues that:

...immediatism was something more than a shift in strategy. It represented a shift in total outlook from a detached, rationalistic perspective on human history and progress to a personal commitment to make no compromise with sin. It marked a liberation for the reformer from the ideology of gradualism, from a toleration of evil within the social order, and from a deference to institutions that blocked the way to personal salvation. Acceptance of immediatism was the sign of an immediate transformation within the reformer himself; as such, it was seen as an expression of inner freedom, or moral sincerity and earnestness, and of victory over selfish and calculating expediency.<sup>28</sup>

In this regard, Charles Stuart had been liberated. He had rejected the Calvinism of his youth and had adopted the belief in the individual's ability to work out one's own salvation. He had spoken out against Bishop Mountain and the Catholic Church for denouncing the idea of personal initiative and had embraced the idea that salvation required an acting out through good works, as seen through his numerous reform activities. If immediatism was the result of both an emotional and intellectual process, Charles Stuart typifies one who encountered that process. He had undergone the "conversion experience of rich personal meaning," which Bertram Wyatt-Brown and others have suggested was common for American abolitionists early in their careers.<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that Stuart's evangelical orthodoxy was not the result of parental upbringing, but rather it was self taught and arrived at when he was already in his



thirties. The same can be said of Charles Finney and others who were influenced by the Second Great Awakening. One can only presume that his failed military career and his estrangement in Canada helped bring about in him a life crisis resulting in such a conversion. Davis describes immediatism as an amalgam of "intense personal anxiety, rapturous freedom, eagerness for sacrifice, and mistrust of legalism, institutions, and slow-working agencies for salvation."<sup>30</sup> Anne Loveland argues that immediatism functioned as a surrogate religion, in that:

...immediatism fulfilled certain needs and alleviated vague frustrations. It appealed to minds and hearts troubled by flux and disorder and disturbed by the apparent irrelevance of traditional values in a changing society. It injected a sense of purpose and direction into lives thwarted by inadequate religions or unrewarding professions. Above all, it satisfied religious yearnings and humanitarianism, reforming impulses that traditional institutions could not fulfill. At the same time, by employing evangelical doctrines in the antislavery context, immediatism gave concrete meaning to abstract notions of benevolence and ability, sin and repentance.<sup>31</sup>

In these descriptions, Davis and Loveland could be describing Charles Stuart, who emerged from years of conflict with the East India Company and spiritual crisis in Canada to embrace, in an almost obsessive fashion, many social causes.

At the same time, it must be cautioned against making broad generalizations about any abolitionist's motives in embracing the cause of abolition. In the case of Charles Stuart, the rejection by Cornelia Weld of his proposal of marriage led him to go to Britain. While he left voicing no objections to her decision, in 1829, at the age of forty-eight, the failure of one serious attempt at marriage seems to have been a significant factor in his leaving the United States. At the same time, it didn't dampen his desire for warm personal relationships and a desire to commit himself to Christian social causes. In the



campaign for immediate abolition of slavery, Stuart had found what he was looking for. In the growing tide of immediatism, he found more friends than he could have imagined.

Filled with enthusiasm while drawing on his personal warmth, Stuart threw himself into the work as a member of the Agency Committee. According to George Stephen, a fellow Agency Committee member, Charles Stuart became known as the "Anti-Slavery Quixote," a man "too apt to sermonizing on all occasions." Given Stuart's outlandish dress and manner, it is clear that many of his would-be critics were given ample ammunition with which to criticize him and dismiss him as an eccentric. After George Stephen condemned him for "sermonizing," he went on to say:

There was an affectionateness in his manner so truly Christian, and an earnestness so simple and sincere, that people loved to hear him, and if he seldom convinced by his argument, he was so obviously a good man, that to have enlisted him in the cause, of itself implied that the cause was good. I believe that his example induced many pious men to think of it who had never bestowed a thought on it before.<sup>32</sup>

Charles Stuart's activities and personality serve to emphasize the important aspect of the antislavery impulse which strictly economic arguments seem to ignore. The American abolitionist newspaper, *Liberator*, reported briefly of Stuart's lecture tour with the Agency Committee. In Brighton, Stuart had given a sensational lecture detailing the "horrors of slavery" with quotations about the flogging of females and the stretching of male slaves by block and tackle.<sup>33</sup> These transatlantic reports did not mean that Stuart had discovered new information about the brutality of slavery. Rather, it demonstrates that, by 1832, Charles Stuart, through his lecturing and writing in Britain, was becoming widely known

in American antislavery circles. As important as his contributions were to the formation of the Agency Committee, and as dedicated as he was to his work as agent, Stuart's significance must also be seen in his role in introducing American antislavery issues to Britain two years before the Emancipation Act of 1833 and at a time when it would seem probable that British attention would be focused on British West Indian slavery.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870*, Columbia, SC, pp. 9-12.
- <sup>2</sup> James Walvin, "The Public Campaign Against Slavery, 1787-1834," in David Eltis and James Walvin, eds., *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas*, Madison, 1981, pp. 63-79. See also Seymour Drescher, "Public Opinion and the Destruction of British Colonial Slavery," in James Walvin, ed., *Slavery and British Society: 1776-1846*, London, 1982, p. 25.
- <sup>3</sup> See for example Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America*, New York, 1966, p. 169.
- <sup>4</sup> *Journals of the House of Commons*, LXXXIV, 1829, pp. 60, 104, 282, 292, 384, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- <sup>5</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, III, June 1830, pp. 229-262.
- <sup>6</sup> Henry Richard, *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge*, London, 1864, pp. 93-94.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Journals of the House of Commons*, LXXXVI, 1831, pp. 35, 38-39; *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, IV, January, 1831, pp. 29-31; Andrew Thompson, *Substance of the Speech Delivered at the Meeting of the Edinburgh Society for the Abolition of Slavery on October 19th, 1830*, Edinburgh, 1830.
- <sup>9</sup> Charles Stuart, *Petitions Respecting Negro Slavery*, Bristol, 1830, pp. 1-4.
- <sup>10</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 32.
- <sup>11</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, III, October 1830, pp. 414-16; IV, January 1831, pp. 41, 58, 60.
- <sup>12</sup> For a detailed essay on early Quaker, transatlantic antislavery activity, see Michael Kraus, "Slavery Reform in the Eighteenth Century: An Aspect of Transatlantic Intellectual Cooperation," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, January, vol. LX, no. 1, 1936, pp. 53-66.
- <sup>13</sup> See Douglas Cameron Riach, "Ireland and the Campaign Against American Slavery, 1830-60," unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1975, pp. 18-37.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; Charles Edward Orpen, *The Principles, Plans, and Objects of the "Hibernian Negro's Friend Society," Contrasted with Those of the Previously Existing "Anti-Slavery Societies"; Being a Circular, Addressed to all Friends of the Negro, and Advocates for the Abolition and Extinction of Slavery; in the Form of a Letter to Thomas Pringle, Esq., Secretary of the London Anti-Slavery Society*, Dublin, 1831, pp. 1-4.
- <sup>15</sup> See Stuart's anti-Catholic remarks in *Emigrant's Guide*.

- <sup>16</sup> Riach, "Ireland and American Slavery," pp. 37-40; Orpen, *Principles*, pp. 2-4.
- <sup>17</sup> Charles Stuart, *On the Prospective Emancipation of Slaves' Unborn Children*, Dublin, [1830?].
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 10.
- <sup>20</sup> Orpen, *Principles*, pp. 10-11.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> Seymour Drescher, "Public Opinion and the Destruction of British and Colonial Slavery," in *Slavery and British Society: 1776-1846*, James Walvin, ed., p. 25.
- <sup>23</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp. 12-13.
- <sup>24</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 2nd edition, London, 1964, pp. 186-88; Riach, "Ireland and American Slavery," pp. 19-22.
- <sup>25</sup> Duncan Rice, "The Anti-Slavery Mission of George Thompson to the United States, 1834-35," *Journal of American Studies*, II, 1968, p. 15.
- <sup>26</sup> Stuart, "The West India Question," printed in *Quarterly Magazine and Review*, 1832, p. 230).
- <sup>27</sup> David Brion Davis, "Immediatism: A Product of American and British Antislavery Thought" in Richard O. Curry, ed., *The Abolitionists: Reformers or Fanatics?* 1965, p. 82.
- <sup>28</sup> Davis, *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- <sup>29</sup> Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Conscience and Career: Young Abolitionists and Missionaries" in Bolt and Drescher, eds., *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, 1980, Folkestone, pp. 192-95.
- <sup>30</sup> Davis, "Immediatism," p. 86.
- <sup>31</sup> Anne C. Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation,'" *Journal of Southern History*, vol. XXXII, February-November, 1966, p. 180.
- <sup>32</sup> Sir George Stephen, *Anti-Slavery Recollections in a Series of Letters to Mrs. Beecher Stowe*, London, 1854, p. 144.
- <sup>33</sup> *Liberator*, April 30, 1832, p. 50.

## CHAPTER 4

### EXPANDING ISSUES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC

In the early 1830s, both in the United States as well as in Britain, there was a shift away from gradualist "antislavery" policies toward immediatism. The cause for this shift is the focus of much debate, but certain things seem widely accepted. First, however and whoever is to be credited with much of the transatlantic antislavery activity, it is clear that the Americans looked to the British for encouragement and inspiration because they seemed further ahead in the fight against colonial slavery. Second, whatever debate there may be about the significance of William Lloyd Garrison within the history of the antislavery movement, his 1833 visit to Britain gave him the prestige to make him, for a period, the most prominent American abolitionist. Third, if Garrison's New England antislavery area was thought to be the center of American antislavery activity, it had a strong rival in the revivalist belt of western New York State and Ohio, under the leadership of Theodore Weld.<sup>1</sup> It is in almost all historical discussions that Charles Stuart is virtually ignored or underrated in terms of his significance. This chapter will attempt to shed new light on his significance to the antislavery cause, both in Britain and in the United States. Charles Stuart was the main contemporary British abolitionist promoted by the American antislavery press, especially Garrison's *Liberator*. It was Charles Stuart who, with his

campaigns against the American Colonization Society, paved the way for Garrison's 1833 visit to Britain.<sup>2</sup> A strong argument can be made that it was through his writings that growing, positive attitudes toward colonization efforts and arguments quickly ceased, paving the way for immediatism. And most significant, perhaps, is the credit he deserves for bringing Theodore Weld into the ranks of the abolitionism.

There seems to be an interruption in the flow of letters Stuart wrote to Theodore Weld in 1830. This may be in part because of the emotional reorientation he was experiencing as he made the transition from American friendships to almost total involvement in the British antislavery cause. In many ways, Charles Stuart and Theodore Weld would never be as close as they were in the first few years of their friendship. However, when Stuart resumed his correspondence with Weld, his letters were as effusive as ever.

Altho' the same land has not held us - altho' the ocean rolls between us - Altho' pursuits beyond our energy to fulfill as we would wish, have engaged our attention...yet unalterably dear art thou to me, my Theodore, and still my 'untraveller' heart trusts in thine.<sup>3</sup>

It was also in this letter that Stuart revealed his involvement in the "sacred pursuit" of antislavery. From that moment on, Charles Stuart set out to introduce and convert Theodore Weld into the antislavery fold. He begged Weld to study some "enclosed articles of information" on the subject, "because they involve a cause of deep and peculiar interest, and because I want to have my Theodore's soul engaged in a work to me the most interesting, with which I have ever met."<sup>4</sup>

Another letter also reflected the same commitment and compassion to both the antislavery cause and to Weld:

I send you ten copies of a pamphlet - read one - and make the best use that you can of the rest. I long to hear of your being engaged in the sacred cause of Negro emancipation. My soul thirsts after you beloved Theodore.<sup>5</sup>

Soon, Theodore Weld began associating with others who shared Stuart's commitment to reform, including Arthur and Lewis Tappan in New York City. The connecting link between Theodore Weld and his new associates in New York City was Charles Grandison Finney, who had moved to a ministry in New York, under the patronage of the Tappan brothers.<sup>6</sup> The steady supply of letters and British antislavery material that Weld was receiving from Stuart must have been shared with Weld's new friends and reflected upon in group meetings. It was out of such small groups that the American Antislavery society would emerge two years later. It would be wrong to speculate that Theodore Weld would never have embraced abolitionism, were it not for Charles Stuart's influence on him. There were many at that period who were embracing religious and social reforms, and it seems probable that sooner or later Weld would have found a cause with which to identify himself. Having said that, however, credit must be given to Charles Stuart for Theodore Weld choosing abolition as such a cause and at an early age. Accordingly, many historians of the period give Stuart credit for his early influence on Theodore Weld.<sup>7</sup>

What remains virtually overlooked, however, perhaps to a large extent because there is no existing collection of Weld's letters to Stuart, is that this regular Weld-Stuart transatlantic correspondence during this period is significant in the introduction of American issues into the British antislavery arena. With Stuart residing in Britain, his conversion to abolitionism had strengthened his

commitment to reforming societal ills. His letters to Weld not only supplied Weld with information about British antislavery efforts but they also demanded information from Weld on American antislavery, as well as other concerns. In that same letter, which included British antislavery pamphlets, Stuart asks Weld about American slavery, freed blacks in the United States, and about Cherokee Indians, but most especially about the American Colonization Society (ACS).<sup>8</sup>

It is highly unlikely that Stuart's interest in the ACS would have been for purely personal interest, especially because the Society's agent, Elliot Cresson, visited England in mid-1831 to raise funds. To many American abolitionists, especially William Lloyd Garrison, the idea of shipping former slaves to Liberia seemed almost as abhorrent as slavery itself. It also provided them with a great issue to exploit, speeding up the shift from gradualism to immediatism. Founded in 1816, the ACS presented itself as a kind of antislavery society. Its goal appealed to those who wished to avoid any sectional bitterness, by offering the South a method of freeing its slaves while at the same time avoiding any threat of retribution. It also appealed to those who saw freed blacks as a social threat.

By the 1830s, however, very few blacks had been freed and sent to Liberia, resulting in people beginning to question the feasibility of such a venture. Increasingly, the radicals were regarding colonization as a sinful compromise with a racist South, which saw even free blacks as not having a place in the United States. Garrison began denouncing the ACS as a pro-slavery organization in the *Liberator*. In June of 1831, when Elliot Cresson arrived in England, Charles Stuart knew none of these American anti-colonization developments. He had, however, become suspicious of the ACS on his own. When he arrived back in the



United Kingdom in 1829, two years later, Stuart would explain that he had thought favorably of the ACS, although his knowledge of it was vague. Stuart's embracing of the "sacred cause of immediate emancipation in our own Colonies," however, changed his attitude of the ACS from one of complacency to one of suspicion. Questioning the sincerity of the ACS' immediatist position, Stuart asked Weld to send him more information about the organization. When offered the chance to discuss the organization with Elliot Cresson at a meeting in the home of Thomas Pringle, secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, Stuart jumped at the chance.<sup>9</sup>

It can only be surmised that the meeting between the two did not go well. Through the early months of 1831, the newly founded *Liberator* had begun printing articles attempting to discredit the ACS. Nothing, however, would have the impact of the October 1 issue, which featured Charles Stuart's *A Letter on the American Colonization Society*. Stuart's "letter" was spread across two-thirds of the front page, instead of the usual layout in columns. It was also printed under the bold headline, "A VOICE FROM ENGLAND!" Editorial comments followed on the inside page:

An anti-colonization voice greets us from across the Atlantic! - We refer our readers to the preceding page, for a Circular put forth in England, by a distinguished friend of the abolition cause. It is drawn up in a wonderfully comprehensive and cogent manner, and must produce an electrifying effect in this country. May the blessing of those who are ready to perish rest upon its benevolent author!

The article went on to quote an unnamed Englishman who had forwarded Stuart's pamphlet to Elliot Cresson and then reported of Cresson's rage at the "determined opposition" being organized in Britain by Charles Stuart. Not only

did Garrison reprint Stuart's *Letter*, but the same number of the *Liberator* referred to his intention to print copies for sale, "with a few introductory remarks of our own" and concluding that "many thousand copies ought to be sold wherever the colonization influence is felt."<sup>10</sup>

A good case could be made that this signals the effective beginning of cooperation between more militant British abolitionists and their American counterparts. In November, the *Liberator* printed Stuart's first direct communication with Garrison and made it clear that the initiative for developing international exchanges of ideas and printed materials had come entirely from Britain. It acknowledged a "munificent gift" of abolition literature from the London Anti-Slavery Society and apologized that "we have sent none of our papers to England.... We blame our negligence in this matter."<sup>11</sup> While Charles Stuart cannot be seen as the lone agent of trafficking international antislavery information and documentation,<sup>12</sup> it was Stuart's arguments and activities that made British abolitionism seem relevant to the Americans.

The *Letter* on the ACS began with a summary of the numbers of free and slave blacks in the United States and a comment on the degradation and rapid increase in their numbers. The duty of the United States to its blacks, wrote Stuart, was exactly the same as the duty of Britain to its colonial slaves..."viz. to obey God, by letting them go free, by placing them beneath wise and equitable laws, and by loving them all, and treating them like brethren."

In making his argument that the policies of the ACS were rejections of these duties, Stuart argued the same points that Garrison had been making for

some time and so developed the theme of similarity between American and British antislavery preoccupations. He argued:

Great Britain and the United States...the two most favoured, and the two most guilty nations upon earth, both need rebuke. They ought to be brethren, mutually dear and honourable to each other, in all that is true and kind. But never, never, let them support one another in guilt. People of Great Britain, it is your business...it is your duty...to give Negro slavery no rest, but to put it down.<sup>13</sup>

In the following year, Garrison would publish his own anti-colonization pamphlet, entitled *Thoughts on African Colonization*. Although Charles Stuart was unknown to Garrison, who describes Stuart as a "captain of the English Royal Navy," Stuart was quoted by Garrison more than any other abolitionist. Stuart's influence was growing as a result of the attention Garrison paid him within the pages of the *Liberator*, so that its readers began to pay attention to Stuart's activities. What perhaps justified the attention Stuart was receiving from Garrison, who called him "one of the most distinguished and indefatigable philanthropists in Great Britain," was his unique role in advocating and promoting American antislavery attitudes in British circles.<sup>14</sup>

At the end of 1832, Stuart produced a new pamphlet, *Remarks on the Colony of Liberia and the American Colonization Society*, which again was printed in full in the *Liberator* as "one of the most eloquent and powerful productions which the anti-slavery controversy has elicited in this country or England." The pamphlet is another example of the growing transatlantic links among abolitionists. In this pamphlet, Stuart demonstrated a deeper knowledge of American antislavery activity. For example, Stuart cited as references many of the American abolitionist journals and pamphlets. Stuart attacked the inherent

racism toward the free black settlements as being necessary only if “the prejudice in the United States against a coloured skin is invincible.” While such comments could easily have been resented by many Americans as interference by a foreigner, Stuart implicated the British in guilt as well. He argued that, while Great Britain boasted that Britons never shall be slaves, “yet she is a slave mistress! Still she keeps 800,000 guiltless Britons in the most brutal bondage.”<sup>15</sup>

Stuart’s next major attack against the ACS was his pamphlet, *Prejudice Vincible: Or the Practicality of Conquering Prejudice by Better Means Than by Slavery and Exile, in Relation to the American Colonization Society*, which was reprinted in the *Liberator* in March of 1833. In writing this pamphlet, Stuart is credited with helping “knot the anticolonization noose.”<sup>16</sup> To Garrison, it was “an unanswerable and soul-thrilling pamphlet...[for its] clearness of moral vision, energy of expression, eloquence of language, and ardour of piety, Captain Stuart has no superior among the philanthropists of the age.”<sup>17</sup>

Again, a case can be made that Garrison’s enthusiasm for Stuart’s writings was because Stuart was articulating arguments well known to American abolitionists, as well as displaying an understanding of the American abolitionist scene, doing so in publications designed primarily for British readers.

Because of the wide reputation Stuart was developing (because of his writings, his understanding of American realities, and Garrison’s enthusiastic support), his *West India Question*, also published in 1832 in London, became accepted as the most important work by a British abolitionist in the United States and quickly became an abolitionist best seller in the United States. Eventually it was endorsed by the American Anti-Slavery Society not only as the standard work

on British abolitionist demands, but until at least 1835, it was regarded as the definitive statement of immediatism, British or American.<sup>18</sup> The American Anti-Slavery Society would distribute thousands of copies of its many American editions and commend it to its itinerant agents as the most important available antislavery document.<sup>19</sup> The first American edition was published in New Haven in 1833 and in 1838 in Newburyport as *Immediate Emancipation*.

As Charles Stuart's fame in American antislavery circles grew and through his friendship with Theodore Weld, he was drawn into correspondence with the Tappan brothers of New York. In a long letter to Arthur Tappan, Stuart explained how he had come to question and oppose the ACS even before he had heard of William Lloyd Garrison and other New England abolitionists.<sup>20</sup>

In 1833, with West Indian emancipation imminent, it is likely there would have been heightened interest among American abolitionists in the activities of their British counterparts. If Stuart's *West India Question* had not been written, the Americans would have perhaps found someone else in Britain to whom they could have looked to legitimize their claims. The American-orientation of Stuart's writing, however, not only made the Americans receptive to his work but produced a sense of warm transatlantic antislavery cooperation. A good case can also be made that, had Stuart not written the *West India Question*, Garrison might never have published his own book, *British Opinions of the American Colonization Society*. Garrison may well have gone to England in 1833 to celebrate the triumph of West Indian emancipation as well as to solicit funds for a proposed school for black youths, but the contacts he had developed with Stuart and his fellow activists assured him a warm welcome. Because Charles Stuart had

raised awareness in Britain of the American issue of colonization, Garrison was able to participate in the antislavery debate in Great Britain by attacking Elliot Cresson and the ACS. It is also generally accepted that Garrison used his successful trip to England to enhance and consolidate his reputation as the pre-eminent antislavery leader in America. In this, Garrison owed a huge debt to the groundwork that had been laid before him by Charles Stuart.<sup>21</sup>

Once in England, Garrison and Stuart met for the first time in London. Garrison would later admit that, upon meeting Stuart, he was somewhat troubled by his "exceedingly eccentric appearance...[and to] wish he had more taste and neatness about his person, for it is worthy of some regard."<sup>22</sup> After the initial awkwardness in meeting, the two men continued to champion the causes of anti-colonization and raise money for Garrison's school project. Stuart was in attendance at the anti-ACS meetings held after Garrison's arrival. Stuart managed to win applause at a July 13 meeting in Exeter Hall with his demand that the assembly should denounce not only slavery but racial prejudice. The speakers who attracted most attention, however, were Garrison, the black American Nathaniel Paul, whose school project Garrison and Stuart supported, as well as British orator George Thompson and Irish politician Daniel O'Connell.<sup>23</sup> In writing home to the Board of Managers of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, Garrison made it clear who deserved much of the credit for weakening the position of the ACS in Britain by writing:

Cresson may succeed a little longer in deceiving a few lords and dukes; but his career has ended among the friends of abolition and the religious community. Charles Stuart, Esq. has done much to obstruct his progress; and we cannot be too thankful to this

eminently pious and indefatigable philanthropist for his labours of love.<sup>24</sup>

While Stuart was deserving of the credit Garrison frequently attributed to him within the pages of *Liberator*,<sup>25</sup> he had done much more than write pamphlets attacking the positions of the ACS. Rather, Stuart's greatest impact was felt in his literal harassment of Elliot Cresson on the lecture trail throughout Britain. "Cresson's disillusionment was complete when encountering the eccentric Charles Stuart...[who] promptly convinced the abhorred [sic] Cresson that he wanted intermarriage and amalgamation." Cresson responded, "With such men, reason is thrown away & argument pointless."<sup>26</sup>

From the beginning, Cresson was a formidable opponent. As a Quaker, he had an avenue into one of the most respected circles of British philanthropy. In addition, during his travels, the Friend's meeting houses were available to him as forums for promoting his views. Cresson was an articulate and well connected spokesperson for the ACS, and his various tours were well timed given the climate of things in Britain. People in Great Britain were preoccupied with West Indian emancipation and tended to look sympathetically on any endeavor thought to be humane regarding the treatment of Negroes. Cresson, in portraying the founding of Liberia as a civilizing mission in Africa, found a receptive audience among such notables as Wilberforce and Clarkson. Both men were in frail health and, while generally sympathetic, did not come through with strong endorsements of the mission of the ACS.

In the fall of 1831, Cresson set out on a tour of Great Britain in the hopes of establishing a pro-ACS party. Over a two-year period and at virtually each stop



along the way, Charles Stuart was present to counter attack the pro-ACS efforts of Cresson. Cresson came to view Charles Stuart, because of his relentless opposition, as his main British enemy. Much of this evidence comes from various accounts given by Stuart's fellow Agency Committee lecturer, George Thompson.<sup>27</sup> Cresson had initially deceived Thompson into believing that the ACS was primarily concerned with abolition. But Thompson, through Stuart's influence, came to realize that the ACS' plan was a bad one, which attempted to deceive the British people. As Thompson's respect for Charles Stuart grew, so did Thompson's admiration for Garrison.<sup>28</sup> Because of his own mobility as a member of the Agency Committee, Thompson was also able to do a good deal to counter Cresson's pro-ACS arguments and his personal attacks on Stuart and Garrison. Most of Thompson's activity was in Scotland where he would build the base of his antislavery network. In a speech to the ladies committee of the Edinburgh Anti-Slavery Society, Thompson was asked about Garrison and Stuart and whether or not they were "blackguards and villains."

I rose and emphatically exclaimed, 'they are not. The one is the intrepid and noble-minded champion of the negro's rights in a country disgraced by its prejudice and despotism...the other is an enlightened, benevolent Christian-minded and holy man. If I were asked to select, from among men, the one I conceived to be most truly and disinterestedly devoted to the service of God and of mankind, I should answer Captain CHARLES STUART...a man whom I am proud to be permitted to call my friend.'

Stuart himself soon arrived in Edinburgh and reinforced Thompson's argument. In spite of previous slanders by Cresson, Thompson reported that Stuart "won the heart of every person to whom he was introduced."<sup>29</sup>



Charles Stuart pursued Elliot Cresson not only into Scotland but into Ireland and the north of England. Where he was less well known, Stuart attacked Cresson and the ACS in writing. It is fair to say that Cresson had underestimated the influence and effectiveness of Charles Stuart in turning the British tide against colonization. At most lecture stops throughout Great Britain, Cresson was confronted either by Charles Stuart or someone who had been influenced by Stuart's writings. Cresson was dismayed to discover an article in the *Leeds Albion*, which recounted "an attack upon the [American Colonization] society by C. Stuart." If Cresson found a reason to take comfort in the way Egerton Smith, editor of the *Liverpool Mercury*, defended the aims and objectives of the ACS, he must have found himself deeply disheartened when, later in the same year, Stuart won Smith over. This dramatic change of allegiance and an acknowledgement of its previous error in supporting the ACS were reflected in the *Mercury's* public endorsement of Stuart's pamphlets.<sup>30</sup>

By mid-1833, Cresson's mission was in serious trouble. He had found in Charles Stuart an adversary willing to fight with a determination and single-mindedness that almost justified Cresson's charges of fanaticism. When Thomas Hodgkin, one of Cresson's English supporters of the ACS, wrote a pamphlet entitled *An Inquiry into the Merits of the African Colonization Society: And a Reply to the Charges Brought Against It. With an Account of the British African Colonization Society*,<sup>31</sup> Charles Stuart quickly responded with a pamphlet of his own, entitled *The American Colonization Scheme Further Unravelling*. Stuart produced this pamphlet so quickly that it impressed Nathaniel Paul who was still in Britain. Alongside the standard anti-ACS points of view, Stuart pressed

arguments against racial prejudice and commented on American treatment of free Negroes and Cherokee Indians, as well as missionary activities in the Sandwich Islands, New Zealand, and Africa. Stuart also wrote as few others could have, from his own unique personal experiences among the Huron and Wyandot Indians and the fugitive blacks in Upper Canada. In mentioning the likes of Garrison, Elizur Wright, John Greenleaf Whittier, Arthur Tappan, and the major American abolitionist publications in his pamphlet, Stuart can be seen as the embodiment of a transatlantic friendship and cooperation he had helped cultivate over the last two years.<sup>32</sup>

By the end of 1833, Charles Stuart had accomplished a great deal and occupied a unique place in antislavery circles. He had seen the Agency Committee transformed into the British and Foreign Society for the Universal Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade, with American slavery as its chief concern. At a time when many British abolitionists were searching for a new role in the aftermath of the Emancipation Act, Stuart had never confined his antislavery interests to British colonial slavery. With the colonization movement completely discredited, the Tappans and Theodore Weld were planning a national antislavery society in the United States. Stuart decided to return to the United States to participate in the increasingly heated American antislavery struggle.

In May of 1834, Charles Stuart sailed from England for the United States. In anticipation of his arrival, the *Liberator* reprinted in full *The American Colonization Scheme Further Unravelled*, proclaiming it as a "cogent, solemn, thrilling irresistible...mass of pure gold" and further proclaiming that "the Negro and his champions in America" were more deeply indebted to Charles Stuart "than

to any man in Great Britain. We are looking daily for his arrival in the United States. He shall have a noble reception.”<sup>33</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Howard R. Temperley, "British and American Abolitionists Compared," Martin Duberman, ed., *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*, Princeton, 1965, pp. 343-61. See also editor's Introduction and in essays by Gilbert H. Barnes, Dwight L. Dumond, and John L. Thomas, in Richard O. Curry, ed., *The Abolitionists: Reformers of Fanatics?* New York, 1965, pp. 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> The Sierra Leone experiment by the leaders of the British antislavery movement sent liberated slaves to that part of West Africa, hoping that they would have a missionary and civilizing impact on their neighbors. Sierra Leone was not intended as a place to send all freed blacks in Great Britain, and the experiment did not have the racist overtones of the plans of the American Colonization Society.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart to Weld, March 26, 1831, Weld papers.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Stuart to Weld, June, 1831.

<sup>6</sup> Dumond, *Antislavery*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 13, n. 28; Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War*, New York, 1962, p. 491; Landon, "Captain Charles Stuart," p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Stuart to Weld, June 1831, Weld Papers.

<sup>9</sup> Stuart to Arthur Tappan, August 5, 1833, reprinted in *Liberator*, October 12, 1833, p. 163.

<sup>10</sup> *Liberator*, October 1, 1831, pp. 158-159.

<sup>11</sup> *Liberator*, November 19, 1831, p. 185.

<sup>12</sup> See for example the letter to William Lloyd Garrison from Josh Phillips, June 6, 1832, reprinted in Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding*, Edinburgh, 1974, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Stuart, *Letter*, printed in *Liberator*, October 1, 1831, p. 158.

<sup>14</sup> William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization: Or, an Impartial Exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles, and Purposes of the American Colonization Society, Together with the Resolutions, Addresses and Remonstrances of the Free People of Color*, Boston, 1832, pp. 41-42, 77.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Stuart, *Remarks on the Colony of Liberia and the American Colonization Society: With Some Account of the Settlement of Coloured People at*

*Wilberforce, Upper Canada*, London, 1832, printed in its entirety in *Liberator*, November 24, 1832, pp. 185-187.

<sup>16</sup> P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865*, New York, 1961, p. 214.

<sup>17</sup> *Liberator*, March 30, 1833, p. 51.

<sup>18</sup> For an explanation of the document's use, see Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Weld-Grimké Letters*, I, pp. 102-103.

<sup>19</sup> Stuart, *West India Question*. An abridged version was published in the *British Quarterly Magazine and Review* in April, 1832.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Stuart to Arthur Tappan, reprinted in the *Liberator*, August 5, 1833, p. 163.

<sup>21</sup> For details of Garrison's trip to England, see Louis Filler, *The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830-1860*, New York, 1963, p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> Garrison to Helen E. Benson, June 25, 1834, in Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames, eds., *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, 5 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1971, vol. I, p. 372.

<sup>23</sup> James Cropper, *Speeches Delivered at the Anticolonization Meeting in Exeter Hall, London*, July 13, 1833, London, 1833, p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> *Liberator*, August 31, 1833, p. 139.

<sup>25</sup> For examples see *Liberator*, October 12, 1833, p. 163; November 9, 1833, p. 177; November 23, 1833, p. 187; December 23, 1833, p. 205; January 4, 1834, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Staudenraus, p. 217.

<sup>27</sup> *Liberator*, August 10, 1833, pp. 126-127; January 11, 1834, p. 7; September 10, 1841, p. 145.

<sup>28</sup> The influence of Charles Stuart is also acknowledged during the same period by the *British Anti-Slavery Reporter*, when it gave a favorable review to Garrison's *Thoughts on Colonization*, but stressed that similar "strong, and as they appear to us, conclusive statements of Mr. Stuart" in *Prejudice Vincible* had already helped to "dissipate the mist which enveloped the Colonization scheme," V, 1832-33, pp. 296-300.

<sup>29</sup> *Liberator*, January 11, 1834, p. 7. More of Stuart's activity in Scotland is reported in another anti-ACS pamphlet, *Liberia: Or the American Colonization Scheme Examined and Exposed. A Full and Authentic Report of a Lecture Delivered by C. Stuart, Esq. at a Public Meeting in Rev. M. Anderson's Chapel, Glasgow, 15th April, 1833*, Glasgow, 1833.

<sup>30</sup> Extracts from the *Mercury* article reprinted in the *Liberator*, March 30, 1833, p. 50.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Hodgkin, *An Inquiry into the Merits of the African Colonization Society: And a Reply to the Charges Brought Against It. With an Account of the British African Colonization Society*, London, 1833.

<sup>32</sup> Nathaniel Paul to William Lloyd Garrison, January 22, 1834, reprinted in *Liberator*, April 19, 1834, p. 58; Charles Stuart, *The American Colonization Scheme Further Unravelled*, Bath 1833, reprinted in *Liberator*, April 19, 1834, pp. 61-62.

<sup>33</sup> *Liberator*, April 19, 1834, pp. 61-63.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**CHARLES STUART AS AN AGENT OF**  
**THE AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY**

The antislavery atmosphere Stuart was leaving behind in the United Kingdom was different from the one he would find upon his arrival in the United States. While his confrontations with Elliot Cresson had been heated and personal and while reports of disruptions at antislavery meetings throughout Britain were common, the conflicts remained nonetheless only verbal. It must also be remembered that slavery for the British was a different reality than it was for the Americans. For the British, slavery was remote, affecting most directly a small percentage of absentee planters and their associates. For the Americans, however, slavery was a domestic problem. It was embedded in the formal political structure of the nation. Sectional compromise over slavery in the late eighteenth century had influenced the drafting of the Federal Constitution and had been vital to its ratification. While many saw the Constitution as an assault on individual states' rights, the abolitionists were given no means of attacking the problem. With the exception of the District of Columbia, the national government had no Constitutional power to abolish slavery. In the early 1830s, criticisms of slavery from below the Mason-Dixon Line were almost non-existent, while abolitionists in the North were on the defensive. Those in business in the North who had

southern interests saw the abolition of slavery as disruptive to their livelihoods. In general, Northerners feared that abolition would produce a mass emigration of freed blacks to the northern states, which had already demonstrated widespread Negrophobia in racist social and political legislation.<sup>1</sup>

The tensions so far had been most apparent in New England, where Garrison's *Liberator*, since 1831, had been inflaming opinions in Boston and beyond. The case of Prudence Crandall, in Canterbury, Connecticut, however, demonstrates the level of hostility that existed in the North. Prudence Crandall ran a school for black children. Because of her activities, she had been subjected to harassment, ranging from the withdrawal of medical and other community services, to acts of violence against herself and her property. Abolitionists such as Samuel May and George Bourne came to her defense, which may have hurt her cause as much as it was intended to help, because it called even more attention to the situation. Early in 1834, there was an appeal pending in the Supreme Court of Connecticut against a lower court ruling to close down the Crandall school. Just as the intimidation that preceded it, this legal decision demonstrates the level of feeling against northern blacks and their abolitionist sympathizers. Legal proceedings had been made possible because Crandall's opponents successfully secured a hasty passage of a state law banning the teaching of black children.<sup>2</sup>

Stuart had learned of the Prudence Crandall controversy from Garrison, and he wrote to her expressing his support.<sup>3</sup> It is also at this time that "Captain Charles Stuart" mysteriously became "Reverend Charles Stuart." While it is unclear why this transition took place, that he was licensed by the Presbyterian Church to preach, as well as his years of preaching in and around Utica prior to



his going to Great Britain, would have allowed him to be called "Reverend." There is no evidence to suggest that Stuart used the title himself. It is known that Stuart was fully aware of the hostile climate abolitionists in America were facing and that his deep Christian faith had locked onto the issue of abolition like no other issue. In 1834, Stuart was returning to New York, an area he knew as well as any part of Britain.

Stuart arrived in New York in time to take an active role in the first convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society in early May. He was welcomed as a representative of the successful British abolition movement, and he responded by presenting the convention an "Anti-Slavery Album" in which the American Society could record its constitution and the names of its members. He also reported to the convention the transformation of the Agency Committee into an organization committed to making the overthrow of U.S. slavery its main priority. In the same speech, Charles Stuart forcefully argued that he did not want to be primarily a spokesman for British abolition or a respected outsider lending support to a struggling American movement. He was not a "stranger and a foreigner" in North America. The ashes of his parents were there, his sister lived there, and he was returning as a "friend and brother." Before the convention ended, Charles Stuart was given an appointment as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>4</sup>

Stuart would soon be spreading the antislavery gospel in the area of western New York, which he knew well from his days as a member of Finney's "holy band." As soon as the New York convention ended, Stuart headed for the New England Anti-Slavery Convention, as an appointed delegate from the

national society. He would quickly discover the heated atmosphere of American abolition at a stop in Middletown, Connecticut. Stuart was travelling with Reverend John Frost and Charles W. Dennison, who had been the editor of the American Antislavery Society's newspaper, the *Emancipator*, but who was now working as a field agent for the society. Dennison was a known antislavery agitator, and his presence inflamed the locals when they attempted to hold an antislavery meeting. What happened would serve as a stark contrast to the "skirmishes" Stuart had with Elliot Cresson and his supporters during meetings throughout Great Britain. After Stuart opened the meeting with a prayer, an angry mob took over the room, shouting down Frost who was attempting to give a speech. A retired naval officer from Georgia took issue with Stuart and began questioning him about his British and military background before challenging him to a duel. Some order was restored to the meeting when Stuart calmly refused the challenge and indicated he had no intention of returning a threatened slap on the cheek. Others became more enraged by Stuart's "smiling countenance" with which he announced that "he desired no other protection than that which God and the law afforded." When rotten eggs were thrown, the abolitionists retreated with the angry mob in pursuit. Stuart and Frost managed to escape, but Dennison was caught and manhandled in the street. The evening of the following day, the mob closed in again, surrounding the house where Stuart and his friends were staying, threatening to tar and feather them. When other friends of the antislavery cause arrived on the scene, the mob quietly dispersed.<sup>5</sup>

Stuart arrived for the convention of the New England Anti-Slavery Society. He spoke to the convention, reiterating the themes of his speech to the

national convention. It is clear that his American colleagues were pleased by his presence, after reading the praise Garrison had showered upon him in the pages of the *Liberator*. John Greenleaf Whittier stated:

I can think of him only with admiration and love. His peculiar and solemn eloquence...his fervent zeal...his steadfast faith...his humble reliance upon the Great Pattern of Philanthropy...all unite to render his presence among us the occasion of gratitude to God.<sup>6</sup>

Since arriving back in the United States, Stuart had been so busy attending meetings and making new friends that it curiously delayed his writing to his friend Theodore Weld. When he did write in early June of 1834, Stuart's love for Weld's sister Cornelia had been rekindled by an unexpected meeting with her in Hartford, Connecticut. Stuart wrote:

I found her sweet and kind; and a new tide of suppressed but not extinguished feeling poured at her presence over my heart.... I tell you, my dearly beloved Theodore, of these things, in that sacred confidence of love by which God has united us I am persuaded for ever. Let them not perplex you. They do not perplex me. They rather give new vigor and sweetness to my life, and help I believe to prostrate my will the more cordially and perfectly to that blessed will of God our Father, which alone without defect is ever wise and kind.<sup>7</sup>

In the meantime, Stuart's "renewed vigor" found its expression in the antislavery cause. He set out on a demanding schedule of lecturing and campaigning, concentrating initially in the Boston area. His style attracted much attention. While some in Britain had been critical of his emotionalism, the Americans, perhaps accustomed to emotional sermonizing, seemed to appreciate his style. In Lowell, Massachusetts, according to the local newspaper, Stuart "enchained the attention of his audience to a late hour...[his delivery was] lucid

and convincing...[and his] startling fact[s] and arguments made a deep and salutary impression."<sup>8</sup> The *Brooklyn Unionist* was in agreement that:

Mr. Stuart's manner, though far from being showy and oratorical, is peculiarly solemn and impressive, and for that reason, well adapted to so solemn and important a subject.... We are highly pleased with the evident Christian kindness which without in the least relaxing his rigid principles of Christian morality, dedicated every sentence, and breathed in every word he uttered. While he hesitated not to pronounce slavery an atrocious crime...a daring transgression of divine law...his reproofs were administered in the spirit of love...in the temper of one who would much rather have occasion to forgive the reformed, than to punish the incorrigible offender.<sup>9</sup>

While this early phase of Stuart's American antislavery activity was by all accounts a success, there were already signs that his relationship with Garrison was in the early stages of estrangement. Despite the warmth of their earlier relationship and their mutual praise of each other's efforts, the two men were drawing apart. Stuart makes no mention of Garrison in his surviving correspondence from this period, while Garrison's letters to his future wife begin to express some underlying distaste for Stuart's outlandish appearance.<sup>10</sup>

For his part, Garrison had a legitimate reason for being impatient with Stuart. One of the purposes of Garrison's trip to England was to raise money for the Manual Labor School for Colored Youth in New England. Stuart wrote to Garrison that he had raised \$500 for the proposed school but was going to remain in England through the winter to raise another \$500. In April, on the eve of his departure from England, the *Liberator* announced that Stuart would be bringing \$1,000 for the establishment of the school. Stuart arrived in New York with the money, but, in the euphoria of his hero's welcome by the delegates to the American Anti-Slavery Society convention, he gave the money to the national

society. A few weeks later, Stuart asked the national society that some of the money be given to the New England Society. After the national society discussed the matter, Elizur Wright, the corresponding secretary for the national society, wrote to Garrison, apologizing that the money had been accepted "without a thought of the claims the New England Society might have upon it...& it is spent."<sup>11</sup>

Given this exchange, it is not at all surprising that references to Stuart in the *Liberator* became rare and that George Thompson would become Garrison's new British ally. When Thompson was forced to flee the United States after a period of hiding and in the face of the very real possibility of being lynched, he became the new hero of international abolitionism. While Stuart had faced physical danger when making his presentations, these occasional incidents were something out of the ordinary. For George Thompson, however, threats of violence were commonplace. For Garrison, whose *Liberator* had a penchant for a sensational style of journalism, it is easy to see that Thompson and not Stuart would provide better copy. At this same time, Charles Stuart was developing close friendships with two notable colonizationists, James G. Birney, who recently had become an abolitionist, and Gerrit Smith, who was still uncertain about throwing his support to the American Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>12</sup> Those developing friendships were taking place outside of Garrison's New England stronghold. This is significant because the real activity and future of abolitionism were to be found, not in New England, but in western New York and beyond.

Charles Stuart had already made a significant contribution to the antislavery cause in his encouragement of Theodore Weld to join the antislavery

struggle. Weld had been preparing for ministry, with many other Finney converts, at the Oneida Institute, in upstate New York. Weld had already gained some notoriety as a lecturer on temperance and moral reform. That reputation, as well as his contact with the Tappan brothers through Finney, found him working as a general agent for the Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary Institutions, another of the Tappan's projects. On one of his extensive tours, Weld made friendships with Beriah Green, a professor in sacred literature at Western Reserve College, and James Birney, a lawyer and planter from Alabama, who at the time was about to become a southern agent for the ACS. On his tour, Weld was also given another charge from the Tappans, namely to find a suitable location for a theological seminary the Tappans would finance. The foundation of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, with Lyman Beecher as president, would be the result.<sup>13</sup>

Cincinnati as a site for a seminary could not have been a more perfect location. It was a growing industrial city, on the border between slave and free territory. As such, there was a strong white prejudice against the many free blacks now residing in Cincinnati. Key to evangelization of the Mississippi Valley, Theodore Weld was successful in persuading several of his classmates to transfer from the Oneida Institute to Lane Seminary, which opened in late 1833. The Lane students, most of whom were men in their late twenties and thirties, quickly involved themselves in mission and social work in this black community.

The students at Lane Seminary, under Weld's influence, became involved in the debate over colonization and immediate abolition. In January of 1834, these discussions became a formal debate. Using the term "debate" to describe

what occurred at Lane Seminary is to take liberties with the word. Theodore Weld was the first speaker and was followed by many others, some of whom had the added credibility of being from the South and one being a former slave. After several days of discussion, the "debate" ended with an almost unanimous vote in favor of immediate emancipation and the formation of a student antislavery society.<sup>14</sup> It was the activities of the Lane students, however, that led to angry criticism of the students and the seminary from the people of Cincinnati. What generated this anger more than anything was the students' activities and socialization with the community's freed blacks. The school's authorities, fearing a backlash against the school, ordered the students to curtail all activities and to cease any discussion of slavery, or they would risk being expelled from school. The students, fifty-one of them, refused to be persuaded and instead voluntarily walked out. Many transferred to Oberlin College, while others went to work in the antislavery movement as agents of the American Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>15</sup>

While this difficult situation at Lane Seminary was unfolding, Charles Stuart was lecturing in New England. It can be assumed, however, that Weld kept Stuart informed as to the situation at Lane Seminary. Stuart was not present for any of the debates, and, as much as he wanted to be reunited with Theodore, he had to visit his sister in Canada and resolve his feelings toward Weld's sister Cornelia.<sup>16</sup> Upon his return from Canada, Stuart visited the Weld family home. Within a few days, his romantic interest in Cornelia would be dispelled forever. In a letter to Theodore, Stuart admitted that his brief reunion with Cornelia two months earlier had made him anxious to renew his courtship with her. In the letter, however, and after a couple of meetings with Cornelia, Stuart reported to



Weld that “she is not to be mine” and that “the magic is broken.” He went on to explain:

I have said nothing to her about it. I love her still as a sister...there is altogether too great a discordancy of temper & mind between us.... I see the fact now glaringly, and wonder that I did not formerly perceive it; and I cannot be sufficiently thankful for the integrity which she then displayed, and which dissipated the foolish & romantic affection with which I had entangled myself and for the prevention this time of a similar entanglement, for which I was prepared.<sup>17</sup>

Freed from all “entanglements,” Stuart was now ready to offer his part in one of his greatest surges of abolitionism in the United States. His role in the western movement was to be less innovative than had been his influence on the Agency Committee in Britain, but it is perhaps more important than most historians acknowledge. Most historians who mention Stuart see his significance in his influence on Theodore Weld. Dwight L. Dumond, one of the great historians of western abolitionism, simply states that “Stuart remained in the United States and rendered great additional service to the cause, but not as a public speaker.”<sup>18</sup> It cannot be argued that Stuart’s contribution to the cause of abolition was as great as Weld’s. But Stuart’s real contribution may have been his indirect enabling of Weld to function in his capacity as one of the significant leaders of the movement. It is evident that, just as in earlier days, Stuart provided Weld with financial assistance. In a letter to Weld, Stuart wrote:

God has bountifully preserved me to receive again my half yearly income, and the sweetest use to which I can apply a portion of it, is to offer you fifty dollars...for your own personal service, if you please, my dearest Theodore.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to financial support, Stuart had been supplying Weld with information about and arguments from the British abolition movement. In August



of 1834, Weld, who was helping to plan the first campaign of James G. Birney, wrote to the former colonizationist that he had just received from Stuart all copies of the English *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, bound in five volumes, and some thirty or forty tracts published by the British Anti-Slavery Society. Weld promised to get Birney the information quickly, as it would be "everything you need in preparing your essays," Weld assured him.<sup>20</sup>

Stuart's influence on Weld and Birney and most notably Gerrit Smith would continue through the next three years. It is not to suggest that the significance of his role was simply through this indirect influence. Dumond suggests that the decisive stage of the western campaign was about to begin in the fall of 1834. The limitations of campaigning through newspapers and pamphlets had been revealed. While such methods were necessary for the education and inspiration of their readers:

At least a few people in any given community had to be aroused and enlisted in the cause before this literature could come into the community and through these people be passed on to others. Agents, more specifically lecturers, had to awaken the community and do it effectively enough to establish a local anti-slavery society.

Dumond argues correctly that it was Theodore Weld and, to a lesser extent, Henry B. Stanton, who more than any others filled this need.<sup>21</sup>

It must also be remembered, however, that Charles Stuart, who had pioneered these methods in the British Isles some three years before, was also an effective field agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York and Ohio. In that the American Anti-Slavery Society was successful in founding local antislavery chapters, Stuart is entitled to his share of the credit for this success.

Charles Stuart and Theodore Weld were reunited in Cincinnati as the students were leaving Lane Seminary. They spent three weeks together, and the pleasure of the visit is evident in the pain it caused Stuart at leaving. He wrote to Weld:

I have felt the want of you my beloved Theodore ever since I left you.... Will you remember that we are brethren by dearer ties than those of blood.... I know you pray for me; & you know that I am for ever with all my heart your faithful C. Stuart.<sup>22</sup>

While many of the Lane Rebels had already left Cincinnati by the time of Stuart's arrival, he did meet with some of them. One who particularly impressed Stuart was James Bradley, the former slave, from whom both Stuart and Weld learned much about life in the South in general and about the lives of slaves in particular. While in Cincinnati, Stuart also reinforced his long-expressed interest in and sympathy for the freed blacks and their condition and treatment by visiting their schools and their homes.<sup>23</sup>

After leaving Cincinnati, Stuart traveled through Ohio, giving lectures and forming antislavery societies. On this particular trip, Stuart sought out a fugitive slave, about whom he had recently heard, and used the occasion to complete his research for an article he was about to have published in the *Emancipator*, entitled *THE PURSUER CONVICTED! THE FUGITIVE RELEASED! Being a practical answer to the question, 'What is the use of Anti-Slavery Societies at the north?'*<sup>24</sup> By the time the article appeared in January of 1835, winter was making travel difficult, and Stuart concentrated his efforts in and around Utica, where he focused on converting to immediatism some genuine opponents of slavery who were either

gradualists or colonizationists. One of the most prominent supporters of colonization was Gerrit Smith.

Smith was a wealthy businessman and landowner, who was a key figure in the ACS. Early in 1835, Smith's support for colonization had come under attack by James Birney, who had only recently been converted to immediatism. Birney wrote a public letter to Smith, attacking the futility of gradualism and labeling colonization a positive bulwark of slavery. Birney also accused Smith, because of his wealth, influence, and reputation, of being the single most important upholder of slavery. As a result of these unnerving public pronouncements, Smith was hesitant to follow Birney into the cause of immediatism for some months.<sup>25</sup>

Charles Stuart first met Gerrit Smith in mid-January of 1835. At the time of their meeting, Smith was agonizing over his decision to abandon his belief in colonization for the cause of immediatism. Stuart would play a key role in his decision. When they met, Stuart was a guest in Smith's home in Peterboro. That Smith would welcome into his home the man who had written more anti-colonization pamphlets than anyone, demonstrates the extent to which Smith's attitudes about colonization had changed. That Stuart would accept the invitation to be a guest in the home of a prominent colonizationist demonstrates the kind and gracious nature of the man. During Stuart's stay with Smith, he discovered that, in principle, Smith was in favor of immediatism but uncertain as to its feasibility. Shortly after his visit with Smith, Stuart wrote to Weld that Smith "is all but with us."<sup>26</sup> Less than one week after leaving Peterboro, Stuart was sending Smith antislavery pamphlets and lovingly cautioning Smith:

My dear brother...Will you accept the accompanying pamphlet, and if you have not read it, read it. I shall love to see your correspondence with Birney on the same subject. The difficulty with you, dear & honored brother, appears to me to be, substituting your own ideas of what the Society *ought to be*, for what *it is*!<sup>27</sup>

During the time Stuart was lecturing in and around Utica, George Thompson was visiting and lecturing in New England. Violent opposition at virtually every stop marked his visit. To the contrary, there is nothing to suggest that Stuart encountered any hostility during his lecturing. This perhaps has to do in large part to the fact that Charles Stuart was known in the Utica area. In mid-February, Stuart wrote to Birney requesting both information and colorful illustrations he could use in his lectures. In addition, he requested to know in which states slave labor would be more productive than free, and vice versa, and also those states in which "emancipation without expatriation is prohibited by law." Stuart also requested anecdotes "with names and dates" about twelve different facets of southern slavery, as well as slave-owning clergy.<sup>28</sup> Stuart's thoroughness and attention to detail, coupled with his passion for the subject, are good indications as to his ability to impress an audience with both his personality and information.

Being British, Stuart had to be careful in his criticisms of the United States about not allowing his audience to resent him as a foreigner. That charges of "foreigner" tended to plague George Thompson throughout his American travels while never being mentioned against Stuart is a good indication that Stuart navigated the situation well. Stuart's private correspondences, however, contain language that is intensely critical. Stuart told Gerrit Smith that a republic that sanctioned slavery:

...is not a republic...it is a many-headed despotism more really compatible and hateful, in these respects, than the Czarship of Russia. The lie which is concealed under the Star Spangled banner, must be repented of...the Eagle must be unchained...or this nation must perish, God being God!<sup>29</sup>

Later in his life, this anger would harden into a deep cynicism regarding the American system, but for now he was able to maintain his composure in public. A report of a meeting Stuart had held in Utica was detailed in the *Emancipator*.

He spoke for about an hour, on the evils and remedy of slavery in our country, with a clearness and force which could not fail to carry conviction to every unprejudiced mind. He exhibited throughout, as he is wont to do on all occasions, that spirit of candor and Christian kindness which is so peculiarly characteristic of the man.<sup>30</sup>

Because of these published reports of his meetings, Stuart's efforts in early 1835 were greatly appreciated by other abolitionists. Early in February, Weld wrote to Birney, expressing his pleasure that Charles Stuart "was doing a great job in New York."<sup>31</sup> The following month, Birney wrote to Gerrit Smith:

I am delighted to hear of the success of our brother C. Stuart. He is a dear brother. The pure truth seems more precious to him, than to almost any other man with whom it has been my happy lot to become acquainted.<sup>32</sup>

In a March issue of the *Emancipator*, it was reported that the Anti-Slavery Society had gained 7,500 new members through 150 new societies, thanks to:

The labors of four agents employed by the society, and the two noble champions of humanity, Stuart and Thompson from England, and those of the devoted Mr. Birney of Kentucky, the number of abolitionists is daily and most rapidly increasing, [noting that] Mr. Stuart has produced the happiest impression in Ohio and New York.<sup>33</sup>

The success Stuart was experiencing, however, did not make him blind to the obstacles that still lay ahead. Writing to Birney, Stuart reported that the agricultural population "seems only to need information to be with us...the difficulty exists in the pride and selfishness and slave-holding connexions of the towns." While some progress has been made, "The Dutch Reform Church still fraternates with its brethren, the boors [sic] of the Cape," and while the Episcopalians were "too polite for our Servant work," the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist ministers were "all with us." Stuart further reported that all but the Methodists, however, were "hampered by their people."<sup>34</sup>

In April of 1835, Stuart attended an antislavery meeting in Hampton, which established the Oneida County Anti-Slavery Association. Along with Beriah Green, Stuart was a featured speaker. He read to the audience portions of letters he had received from Weld, Birney, and Thompson and was selected as one of five delegates to attend the upcoming annual convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York.<sup>35</sup>

At that national convention in May, Stuart renewed acquaintances with many leading abolitionists, including George Thompson. Stuart and Thompson had written to each other in the months they had been in the United States and still maintained a mutual admiration for one another. At the convention, however, it was Thompson who attracted attention, as had Stuart the previous year as the most prominent representative of British abolitionism. Stuart was seen as and acted like a local American abolitionist. Stuart was also still corresponding behind the scenes with Gerrit Smith, attempting to get Smith to join the American Anti-Slavery Society. Despite the quiet behind-the-scenes role Stuart occupied at the

convention, he was not allowed to forget that he was still viewed as a spokesman and interpreter of British abolition. The society's annual report noted Stuart along with Thompson and expressed its thanks to the "noble philanthropists of Great Britain.... For the mission to our aid of two of their noblest advocates in the cause of the oppressed, thousands will rise up and call them blessed."<sup>36</sup>

While many would indeed rise up, it was those who rose in anger that attracted much attention. The American anger against Thompson as a "foreigner" has been well documented, and there is also reason to believe that, at times, there was a degree of confusion between Stuart and Thompson. On the eve of Thompson's forced departure from the United States, a local newspaper condemned Stuart in a clear confusion with Thompson. It reported that the American abolitionists had imported a "brazen-faced Englishman named Stuart."

It was thought among a certain class, that even the stoutest hearts could not withstand such mighty arguments...such bewitching eloquence as he could command. And when to these rare qualifications were added the virtues of a 'humble Christian,' it was thought that to listen to him, was to become a convert to his doctrine! However, Stuart's arrival in America was not much in advance of the reception of information which proved him to be a fellow of at least doubtful reputation and withal a hypocrite.<sup>37</sup>

The reference to a "doubtful reputation" makes this clearly a reference to Thompson and not Stuart. The revelation, often exploited by his detractors, was that, in his youth, Thompson allegedly embezzled from an employer. Thompson, however, was never legally charged with the offence.<sup>38</sup>

While Thompson was forced to leave the United States, it was not because of rumors of his disreputable past but rather his effectiveness as a speaker. At the same time Thompson was becoming controversial, Stuart was maintaining a low



profile. He had been commissioned by the national society as an agent for another year. But over the next few months, Stuart spent his time writing a series of articles, which were eventually published in the antislavery press.<sup>39</sup>

It must be emphasized that Stuart's withdrawal from active campaigning in order to write was not out of his fear of the kind of violence Thompson was encountering. Stuart welcomed opposition, both intellectually and emotionally, and expressed such in a letter he wrote to Smith in May of 1835. After regretting that Smith was still unable to join the national society, Stuart expressed confidence "that the time is at hand when you will wave [sic] the scruples which restrain you; and join us with all your heart in the great principles which already are as much yours as ours."<sup>40</sup> Stuart also states that the threat of violence could be a catalyst that might speed up the process, arguing:

If, in pursuing the righteous, manly & republican course, we should indeed meet with embittered opposition, the call of duty only becomes the more solemn & more loud, to be found at our posts...each man open, doing his duty & none waiting for his neighbour.<sup>41</sup>

Stuart's letter to Smith also reveals his growing seeds of frustration with the American political realities regarding slavery. These frustrations would become deeper as time passed. Stuart complained to Smith that:

The idolatry of this people for their political institutions, is full of guilt and pregnant with danger.... For the present case it is completely insane and suicidal. Free men, so fond of freedom, that they crush the main spring of all freedom, free inquiry...so fond of liberty, that they do not only keep slaves, but insist on depriving their fellow free men of some of the dearest of their rights, viz. their rights at the elections and in petitioning. [Stuart longed for the day when] liberty, republicanism, and Protestant Christianity, may no longer be made a stink in the nostrils of every upright and unprejudiced mind, by thus continuing, as they now are, the



efficient shield of the most atrocious system of legalized tyranny which disgraces the world.<sup>42</sup>

At the close of his letter to Smith, Stuart added a postscript in which he revealed his satisfaction in the fraternal bonds of the antislavery movement and in which he expressed his amazement at Smith's assumption that the Lane Seminary rebels were merely boys. Stuart concluded the letter stating:

Boys!...and in the flower of manhood, nearly thirty years old, upon an average!! Boys...and glowing with heaven's fire, matured and prayerful!!! Boys & standing like Christian martyrs, invincibly yet meekly in the gap for God & man...for liberty and law...for republicanism and truth...for love and righteousness...Oh what glory of the world would these States be, were all our men and women boys like them.... Birney who you love, & most worthily love, delighted to be instructed & edified by those boys.... Perhaps you may some day experience the glorious grasp of their intellect & rejoice in the holy fire of their hearts.... You ought to be knit together...you are made, to love one another.<sup>43</sup>

If Stuart believed that the violence Thompson was facing in New England was inevitable for himself, he was correct. The most dramatic violence Stuart would perhaps encounter in his career occurred in Utica the following autumn. On October 21 and 22 of 1835, more than 600 abolitionists met from the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. From his previous work, Stuart is to be credited with starting many of the local societies and ultimately recruiting the large number of abolitionists in the upstate New York area. Once it was learned that a major antislavery convention was to be held in Utica, opposition was organized, and there were several attempts made to deny the abolitionists a forum. One of the people leading the charge against the convention was a man named Samuel Beardsley, a lawyer, judge, and state senator, who was one of the most prominent Democratic politicians in New York State. He was a strong Jacksonian and a

leader of the slave-owning southern president's party. He did nothing to alleviate the threat of violence by addressing an angry mob on the eve of the convention, saying that, if the abolitionists insist on meeting, "they shall be responsible for all the consequences."<sup>44</sup> When the convention began in Utica's Second Presbyterian Church, the angry mob of anti-abolitionists broke into the meeting, filling the church aisles, taking over the rostrum, and chasing the abolitionists out of the building.<sup>45</sup> While Stuart was not the main target of their anger, Theodore Weld reports that, when Stuart was asked by one of the mob where Tappan was, Stuart replied bluntly, "I shan't tell you!"<sup>46</sup> With the convention in complete disruption, many of the abolitionists fled Utica, also being forced out of their hotels. According to one report, Stuart returned to his hotel and went to bed. When the hotel was besieged by the angry mob, Stuart was aroused from sleep by Captain Hand, the landlord, and told of the threats of the mob. Stuart responded by sending a message to the rioters "that if they would wait until the morning he would meet them without fail; and then composed himself again to sleep." The reports indicate, however, that it was the resourceful Captain Hand and not Charles Stuart who managed to keep the mob at bay.<sup>47</sup>

It is difficult to say for certain whether this was Stuart's most significant brush with violence. Had he remained a close friend of Garrison's, there may have been something recorded in Garrison's private correspondence or in the *Liberator* to indicate otherwise. It is certain that the turbulent final months of 1835 saw the end of Stuart's most intense phase of American campaigning. Although he would continue to give lectures and make the occasional tour, his work as a full-time agent for the national society was over.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent overview of the climate of northern racism, see Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, Chicago, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> For a more comprehensive explanation of the Crandall incident see, Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America*, New York, 1966, pp. 211-217.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart to Crandall, cited in *Liberator*, January 4, 1834, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> American Anti-Slavery Society, Reports of Meetings, 1-6, 1833-39, pp. 4-5, 7, 9, 10, 37, 52-53, Boston Public Library; also reported in *Liberator*, May 17, 1834, pp. 78-79; May 24, 1834, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Reported in *Liberator*, May 31, 1834, p. 87; reported in *Emancipator*, June 3, 1834, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Reports on a convention of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, reported in *Liberator*, May 31, 1834, pp. 86-87, July 19, 1834, p. 113; *Emancipator*, June 10, 1834, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Stuart to Weld, June 3, 1834, Weld Papers.

<sup>8</sup> Lowell *Observer*, cited in *Liberator*, June 14, 1834, p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> Hartford *Chronicle*, cited in *Emancipator*, July 7, 1834, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Garrison to Helen E. Benson, June 24, 1834, in Merrill and Ruchames, eds., *Letters of Garrison*, vol. I, p. 372.

<sup>11</sup> Letters from Stuart to Garrison, in *Liberator*, January 4, 1834, p. 1, April 12, 1834, p. 59; editorial, *ibid.*, April 19, 1834, p. 63; Letters from Wright to Amos Phelps, June 20, 1834, and Wright to Garrison, June 30, 1834, Boston Public Library.

<sup>12</sup> Betty Fladeland, *James Gillespie Birney: Slaveholder to Abolitionist*, New York, 1955, pp. 75-89.

<sup>13</sup> Dumond, *Antislavery*, pp. 158-165.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive study of Lane Seminary, Lawrence T. Lesick, "The Lane Rebels," Doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1979.

<sup>16</sup> Stuart to Weld, June 3, 1834, Weld Papers.

<sup>17</sup> Stuart to Weld, August 5, 1834, Weld Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Dumond, *Antislavery*, p. 182.

<sup>19</sup> Stuart to Weld, January 20, 1835, Weld Papers.

- <sup>20</sup> Weld to Birney, August 7, 1834, cited in Dwight L. Dumond, ed., *Letters of James Gillespie Birney*, New York, 1838, p. 129.
- <sup>21</sup> Dumond, *Antislavery*, pp. 183-185.
- <sup>22</sup> Stuart to Weld, November 24, 1834, Weld Papers.
- <sup>23</sup> Stuart to Wright, cited in *Emancipator*, December 23, 1834.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, January 13, 1835.
- <sup>25</sup> Fladeland, *Birney*, p. 102.
- <sup>26</sup> Stuart to Weld, January 20, 1835, Weld Papers.
- <sup>27</sup> Stuart to Smith, January 20, 1835, Gerrit Smith Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.
- <sup>28</sup> Stuart to Birney, February 16, 1835, Weld Papers.
- <sup>29</sup> Stuart to Smith, May 1, 1835, Smith Papers.
- <sup>30</sup> *Emancipator*, January 27, 1835.
- <sup>31</sup> Weld to Birney, February 16, 1835, Dumond, ed., *Letters of Birney*, p. 180.
- <sup>32</sup> Birney to Smith, *Ibid.*, p. 191.
- <sup>33</sup> *Emancipator*, March 10, 1835.
- <sup>34</sup> Stuart to Birney, February 16, 1835, Weld Papers.
- <sup>35</sup> Cited in *Emancipator*, May 5, 1835.
- <sup>36</sup> American Anti-Slavery Society, *Second Annual Report, with the Speeches Delivered at the Anniversary Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the City of New York, 12th May 1835*, New York, 1835, pp. 16-22, 24, 31-35, 53.
- <sup>37</sup> From an article in the *Norwich Courier*, reprinted in *Liberator*, November 21, 1835, p. 185.
- <sup>38</sup> For a detailed description of these circumstances as well as of Thompson's visit to America, see Duncan Rice, "The Anti-Slavery Mission of George Thompson to the United States, 1834-35," *Journal of American Studies*, II, 1968, pp. 13-31.
- <sup>39</sup> Charles Stuart, "On the Abolition of Slavery by Great Britain," *Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine*, I, No. 1, October, 1835, pp. 3-21, I, No. 2, January, 1836, pp. 107-117; Charles Stuart, "On the Colored People of the United States," *ibid.*, II, No. 1, October, 1836, pp. 11-22; Charles Stuart, "On the Use of Slave Produce," *ibid.*, II, No. 2, January, 1837, pp. 153-172.
- <sup>40</sup> Stuart to Smith, May 7, 1835, Smith Papers.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, New York, 1970, pp. 85-92.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Weld to Lewis Tappan, March 9, 1836, in Merrill and Rauchames, eds., *Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, I, p. 274.

<sup>47</sup> Bagg, *Pioneers of Utica*, p. 545.

## CHAPTER 6

### STRENGTHENING AMERICAN TIES

Charles Stuart remained in the United States until mid-1837. The last eighteen months saw the climax of his antislavery campaigning. The American Anti-Slavery Society expanded its efforts significantly, with the plan to appoint seventy full-time agents. While fewer than seventy agents actually went into the field, it nonetheless represents a major undertaking that would never be repeated. In later years, financial difficulties would prevent an undertaking on such a massive scale.<sup>1</sup> For the time being, however, there were matters other than financial that were causing internal problems within the national society. William Lloyd Garrison was the figure at the center of the controversy. The crucial disagreements over issues of priorities and social and political philosophies had not fully emerged before Stuart's temporary return to Britain. Prior to Stuart's departure from the United States, Garrison was becoming controversial and viewed with suspicion by many abolitionists.

Charles Stuart's role during this period was less public than in 1834 and 1835. Even in western New York, Stuart's role was secondary to that of Weld's. During this period, Stuart was continuing his important behind-the-scenes efforts and further distancing himself from Garrison. He continued to attend antislavery meetings and conventions. When his second year as a full-time agent for the

national society ended, they recommended that he be recommissioned to work in New England, but Stuart refused.<sup>2</sup> In the year before his departure to Britain, Stuart remained independent of all institutional ties.

One reason for Stuart's relatively peaceful life over the next eighteen months was that the center of extreme anti-abolition violence had shifted further west. Theodore Weld's effectiveness in Ohio in establishing new antislavery societies had made that state the most significant antislavery state. Opposition to abolitionism also grew. James Birney had established an antislavery newspaper, the *Philanthropist* in Cincinnati. After many threats, an angry mob finally destroyed his press, and he was forced to stay away from the city for several weeks. In St. Louis, Elijah P. Lovejoy was attempting to publish his antislavery views in a publication called the *Observer*. Also in 1836, his offices were raided and smashed, and he was forced to move to Alton, Illinois. There, too, Lovejoy faced heated opposition, and, in late 1837, Elijah Lovejoy became the abolition movement's first martyr.<sup>3</sup>

By comparison, upstate New York was peaceful. In January and February of 1836, Weld visited and campaigned in and around Utica. Stuart attended many of Weld's meetings, and the closeness of the two also means that there are no letters from this period. But Stuart's letters to Birney make it clear that Stuart shared in the missionary successes of his one-time protégé. There is also evidence to suggest that Stuart viewed the lack of antislavery opposition in upstate New York not as the end of a storm, but as "the lull, which often divides its fury. It has had a fearful sweep...and how soon it may recommence we know not!...I regard its present calm, not as a cessation, but as its mustering for a deadlier blast."<sup>4</sup>

Again, it was not Stuart's fear of anticipated violence that can explain his relative withdrawal from public campaigning. His letters to Birney reveal almost an excitement about the mounting turbulence in Cincinnati, just as had his letters to Gerrit Smith. In fact, he wrote to Birney that he was tempted to join Birney "...& to share all your dangers." But he concluded that his presence "would only further madden the madness, which raves and rages against impartial liberty, & holy law, & brotherly love, around you."<sup>5</sup>

It may have been the case that Stuart believed his nationality would cause unnecessary agitation in the more hostile environs outside of the upstate New York region where he was well known. However, in the same letter to Birney, Stuart draws the conclusion that his going to Cincinnati would be "like rushing upon a lion with a straw."<sup>6</sup> This revelation suggests that Charles Stuart was becoming aware of his physical limitations after years of almost non-stop antislavery activity. At the time this letter was written, Theodore Weld had given his last antislavery lecture two months before. Since the Lane Seminary revolt, Theodore Weld had also been a tireless antislavery campaigner but retired because of physical and nervous exhaustion after only two years of campaigning. It must be remembered that Stuart was almost thirty years older than Weld and had been actively lecturing and preaching with the same intensity for five years on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition, Stuart had been a prolific writer, whereas Weld's great writings were yet to come. There is nothing to suggest that Stuart suffered the kind of breakdown that Weld experienced, but, writing to Weld from England some eighteen months later, he mentioned a lack of vigor which made him hesitant to commit himself to further campaigning in the United States. He



said, "Were I with you I could be of little or no service to you, as was the case for the last year before I left you."<sup>7</sup>

When Stuart left the United States for Britain, he left as the first seeds of discord within the American Anti-Slavery Society were being felt. The issues that would split the American movement and eventually carry dissension across the Atlantic were beginning to emerge in 1836 and 1837. That Garrison's name is noticeably absent in Stuart's writings, both public and private, during this time, indicates the growing tensions that were to confront the national society.

The American movement eventually split because Garrison and his supporters were seen by their critics as slowing the momentum of antislavery activity by advocating women's rights, non-resistance, abstention from the polls and other related political activities, not to mention a series of unorthodox religious views which included the repudiation of the Sabbath and the rejection of a regular church ministry. It is easy to understand how Stuart would take issue with these proposals of Garrison, particularly on issues of women's rights and Sabbath observance, given his writings on women in his *Emigrant's Guide* and his invitation of a court-martial in the army over Sabbath observance.

One difference within the antislavery ranks that managed to become public and involved Stuart was over the issue of boycotts of slave produce. Stuart had personally practiced a prohibition of slave produce since 1830, and he attempted to make that prohibition a formal policy of the national society at their annual convention in 1837. At the national convention, Stuart's drastic policy of a total boycott was replaced by a watered-down version moved by Gerrit Smith, in which members were invited to examine the question, "whether they can innocently

make an ordinary use, or be concerned in the traffic of the productions of slave labor." Smith later wrote with admiration that his resolution had been carried "with but one dissenting voice...that of Charles Stuart, a man, who never consents to sacrifice a hair's breadth of moral principle."<sup>8</sup>

While Stuart was the only dissenting voice, he personally continued boycotting slave produce. This demonstrates that, within the ranks of abolitionism, there were widespread differences of opinion on tactics. While the issue of boycotting was not eventually what would split the movement, these disputes would have a direct influence on Stuart's attitudes. He would later make much of the claim that, when faced with the evidence of prohibition's unpopularity, he had been one of its strong supporters. He would contrast his own unwavering commitment to Garrison's determination to pursue other reform issues under the antislavery banner. In the course of his published debate with Elizur Wright over the use of slave produce, Stuart wrote:

My dear brother is unwilling that the Anti-Slavery Society should also become an anti-slave produce society. So am I...but on grounds different from his. I am unwilling on the same grounds, on which I am unwilling, that the Sunday school Society, or the Temperance Society, &c &c should become also, an Anti-Slavery Society. Those societies sin, I think grievously by rejecting Anti-Slavery facts and Anti-Slavery principles, so much as they do.... But yet I would by no means have them become anti-slavery societies. Their appropriate course is already marked out and it is a glorious one. No important work can be accomplished efficiently without a wise division of labour.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the controversy over reform issues, there were three other issues that would symbolize Stuart's antagonism with Garrison, namely the woman question, non-resistance, and the acceptance of government and the Constitution.

Stuart's position on women seems erratic at best, given his many associations with women during his time in the United States. His account of British emancipation, written for an American audience, stressed the contribution of women.<sup>10</sup> On arriving in the United States, Stuart had been a prominent voice in promoting the role of women in the cause of abolition. His visit to Prudence Crandall can be seen as symbolic of his advocacy. During the same period, Stuart made an impassioned appeal to the Salem Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, pleading, "My dear sisters!...we need all your tender and holy sympathies in this cause. In our struggle with the proud of heart and the mighty of this world, we ask your aid."<sup>11</sup> Stuart also left no record of any protest at the emergence of two famous female abolitionists, Angelina and Sarah Grimké, in 1836, even when Angelina was accepted by her future husband, Theodore Weld, as one of the seventy antislavery agents.

While it is understandable that Garrison would have been confused by what appeared to be a reversal in Stuart's thinking, a case can also be made that Stuart's views on women (in 1836-1837 and in the 1840s) were consistent with his long-held beliefs that, in all fields, men and women had complementary but separate roles. He had held these ideas even before he became an abolitionist, publishing comments on the need to uphold the civilizing influence of women who were on the frontier society in Canada. In fact, Stuart offered a resolution at the fourth annual convention, making it clear that he never advocated that women should join men in a formal sense. He regarded:

...as one of the most cheering signs of the times, the assembling of the convention of American women, now in session in this city, to adopt measures, and mingle their prayers and sympathies with

ours, for the redemption of our suffering brethren and sisters from slavery.<sup>12</sup>

While it might have been understandable how Stuart's views on the role of women could have been misinterpreted, his attitude on political action, the other issue central to the split in the American Anti-Slavery Society, could never have been in doubt. Garrison first knew Stuart as a political agitator in the early 1830s because of his work in petitioning parliament. His role in his campaign against Elliot Cresson and the American Colonization Society had been that of agitation. While perhaps Stuart wouldn't appreciate the term, he was essentially an agitator whose sole purpose was to arouse public opinion and guide it into channels where the maximum amount of pressure in favor of abolition could be brought to bear on government. Because Stuart saw slavery as sin and, as such, not only contrary to the Bible but incompatible with the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, he devoted himself to exerting pressure on governments and society at large. It can further be argued that British successes in the cause of abolitionism were the results of political action.

Closely connected to these attitudes was his position on non-resistance, the other central point of departure with Garrison. This is another example of how Stuart could have been misread if someone knew only of his public persona without having read some of his writings or personal correspondence. While he may have had an almost "antimilitary" career and responded to mob violence with a turn of the cheek, he was not in any way a pacifist. In September of 1836, in the aftermath of the Cincinnati mob violence, which attacked James Birney's printing

press, Stuart wrote to Birney, cautioning him on showing restraint while at the same time justifying a rationale for the use of force. He wrote:

You ask me, dearest brother for my sentiments about Peace.... In the Bible, I find no limit to the principles of Peace, suffering without retaliation or violent resistance, between individuals, or Nations. I do not find that God has any where, given authority of violence, to individual, over individual, or nation, over nation...and if He have not, His general law of Peace, conquering by suffering & love only, remains in all its force.... But I do find, that God invests civil governments, with corrective powers, without limit, for the support of good, & for the punishment of evil doers. Roms. 13. 1-4. What ever degree of violence therefore may be requisite for the sacred purposes; for sustaining right, & punishing wrong, by the civil power, must be exercised.... In your soul-trying case, dearly beloved and most honored brother, I should say, in your individual and domestic capacity, lean on the Lord & trust Him only.... Let every man know, that as to arms and violence, you are defenceless; and I am persuaded, that, if you do this, of your own heart, in faith & love, in prayer and obedience, you will be safer, than the terrors of earth and hell clustered round you, could make you.<sup>13</sup>

It was largely through such correspondence that Stuart and Birney developed an enduring friendship. During Birney's difficulties in Cincinnati, Stuart's letters grew more effusive. In March of 1836, Stuart sent via Weld for a subscription to Birney's *Philanthropist* with the assurance that "my dearly beloved and honored brother, my soul is with you." He asked Birney to send him:

...some details...some of those familiar details which embody common life before you. [In particular] the amount of physical security & or physical danger around you. The comparative strength in your neighbourhood of friends and enemies. The security & insecurity as you deem it of your press...[and details about] the state of Cincinnati in regard to abolition...but particularly, all about yourself, that you can afford to say.<sup>14</sup>

In August, after the crisis in Cincinnati had diminished, Stuart wrote a letter to Birney, beginning with a page of biblical quotations on the theme, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the

kingdom of heaven.” He continued in the letter, urgently asking questions and displaying the same kind of enthusiasm he had in his correspondence with Weld.

He wrote:

I write not to instruct thee. Thou art instructed! I write not to comfort thee. God is comforting thee & will comfort thee.... I write not to tell thee of my poor sympathy. Thou knowest it, & thy kind heart forgives its paucity. But I write to thee, to ask thee...to tell me how it has been with thee, since Satan outwitted himself, and God took him in his own craftiness & range on the night of 30th Ultimo; to tell me how the family are...how our dear Coloured people are...how the Schools are...how the more than ever blessed Anti-Slavery Spirits are about you...how the Anti-Slavery Society stands...whether Right & Law & Liberty are entirely prostrate.<sup>15</sup>

Because Charles Stuart would be absent from the United States in the years leading up to the split in the American Anti-Slavery Society, it is important to note that Stuart’s friendships had developed with people on the anti-Garrison side, with the exception of the eventually neutral Theodore Weld. As has been his unique trademark, Stuart continued to maintain abolitionist friendships on both sides of the Atlantic, including British abolitionists the likes of Joseph Sturge, William Blair, and Amos Phelps. His major American friendships were with James Birney, Lewis Tappan, Gerrit Smith, Beriah Green, and of course Theodore Weld. Stuart built on his friendship with Smith, established in 1835, to reach a familiarity second only to that he shared with Weld. This can be evidenced by the boldness with which Stuart solicited a large contribution to the American Anti-Slavery Society,<sup>16</sup> and in his references to “home visits” he would make as a guest at Smith’ estate. Stuart wrote in September of 1836, revealing a brief insight as to what those visits were like, saying:

I may mention that I anticipate being able to spend from four to six weeks with you, that I shall need a room to myself with fire, so I

may retire whenever I feel inclined, & especially, that I may be at liberty to withdraw early in the evenings, say eight o'clock ordinarily at least. You must let me saw and split my own wood...and if your village has a friendly Cabinet-maker's shop, to which I could resort for exercise, without reserve, it would much gratify me,...I need not tell you that I should feel under your roof, completely as with a brother.<sup>17</sup>

As his circle of friendships might indicate, Charles Stuart, perhaps unknowingly, was positioning himself to be an extreme partisan in the mounting discord slowly manifesting itself within the ranks of abolitionism that would eventually reach both sides of the Atlantic. It was during this time that Stuart continued to ensure that British abolitionists were informed about the cause in America, by sending American antislavery literature across the Atlantic. In a March 1837 letter to Theodore Weld, something of these activities is revealed. Stuart enclosed "one of my periodical circulars to our British friends" and asked Weld to send it off with the following papers:

A. & S. Grimké's Appeals. The Address of the Kentucky Presbyterians against Slavery...Papers containing General Jackson's parting address, & Mr. V. Buren's inaugural, on slavery...The Texan question Govr. Ritner's message...6 Reports of the N.Y. Vigilance Committee...together with any other papers or documents, which you think would throw light upon the present posture of the subject in this country.<sup>18</sup>

Certainly this letter exposes not only his awareness of the American situation but his vital role as an intermediary between abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic. Stuart planned to return to Britain in early 1837, but he delayed his departure, presumably to attend the American Anti-Slavery Society's national convention in New York in May. Theodore Weld had been planning to accompany Stuart back to Britain, but ill health resulting from the strains of strenuous antislavery campaigning forced him to go instead to his parent's house



and recuperate. He was also too ill to attend the national convention. The news that Weld would not be travelling to Britain with Stuart must have deeply disappointed Stuart, who attempted to mask it in a letter to Weld, laced with self-pity. Stuart said he didn't blame Weld, "nor is disappointment so new a thing to me, as to produce much heartbreaking."<sup>19</sup>

During Stuart's time in America, he and Weld had not seen each other as often as their friendship or their respective commitments to abolition might have implied. The two would eventually become estranged, but for the time being, Weld's failure to accompany Stuart back to Britain does not imply any weakening in the emotional bond between them at this stage. Writing at the end of 1837, Weld explained the nature of this bond in discussing an issue of disagreement with the Grimké sisters. In his youth, Weld admits that he had been intolerant of contrary opinions:

...but our dear Charles Stuart has entirely cured me of that and made me ashamed of it. While yet a boy I became acquainted with him, and from that time till now our intimacy has been that of an indivisible existence; and yet our creeds and speculative opinions, doctrinal views and philosophical belief are as wide asunder as the poles. We are always discussing when together and always disagreeing in opinion.

Weld was also the first to admit his own sense of indebtedness to Charles Stuart, and, as he grew closer to his future wife, Angelina Grimké, he was particularly disappointed that she barely knew Stuart. He wrote:

I can hardly trust myself to speak or write of him: so is my whole being seized with love and admiration of his most unearthly character that what ever I say of him seems to others like the extravagance of enthusiasm. I feel humbled and shrink with a sense of conscious and sometimes almost overpowering unworthiness when I look upward to the pure heights of his heavenly character. I have never known such a character! Like the



eagle he flies alone! His absence almost seems like the subtraction of a portion of my own being; and I daily render thanks to my Lord and master and "elder brother" that he stooped so low as to take a man of earth and clothe him so richly with beauty and purity and majesty of his own spirit.<sup>20</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Dumond, *Antislavery*, p. 185.
- <sup>2</sup> The American Anti-Slavery Society, Committee on Agencies, Minute Book, June 15, 1836, Boston Public Library.
- <sup>3</sup> Dumond, *Antislavery*, pp. 183-184, 221-227.
- <sup>4</sup> Stuart to Birney, March 7, September 30, 1836, Weld Papers.
- <sup>5</sup> Stuart to Birney, September 30, 1836, Weld Papers.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Stuart to Weld, February 23, 1838, Weld Papers.
- <sup>8</sup> A short reference to the dispute at the 1837 convention is in *Fourth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society*, which merely says that Stuart's motion was "laid upon the table and indefinitely postponed, after considerable discussion," p. 23. Smith, in praising Stuart, said he promoted the more innocuous resolution in order to promote harmony, in *Liberator*, July 2, 1837, p. 106.
- <sup>9</sup> Stuart, "On the Use of Slave Produce," *Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine*, II, No. 2, January, 1837, p. 167.
- <sup>10</sup> Stuart, "On the Abolition of Slavery by Great Britain," *Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine*, II, no. 2, January 1836, p. 108.
- <sup>11</sup> Remarks reprinted in *Liberator*, July 20, 1838, p. 113.
- <sup>12</sup> *Fourth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society*, p. 27.
- <sup>13</sup> Stuart to Birney, September 30, 1836, Weld Papers.
- <sup>14</sup> Stuart to Birney, March 7, 1836, Weld Papers.
- <sup>15</sup> Stuart to Birney, August 31, 1836, Weld Papers.
- <sup>16</sup> Stuart to Smith, January 25, 1836, Weld Papers.
- <sup>17</sup> Stuart to Smith, September 29, 1836, Weld Papers.
- <sup>18</sup> Stuart to Weld, March 7, 1837, Weld Papers.
- <sup>19</sup> Stuart to Weld, May 8, 1837, Weld Papers.
- <sup>20</sup> Weld to Angelina Grimké, December 28, 1837, Barns and Dumond, eds., *Weld-Grimké Letters*, I, pp. 507, 509.

## CHAPTER 7

### BATTLING APPRENTICESHIP

Even before Charles Stuart had gone to the United States in 1834, there had been disagreements within the British abolition movement. This came to light when the Agency Committee, which was influenced as much by Charles Stuart as anyone, had transformed itself into the British and Foreign Society for the Universal Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade. The parent Anti-Slavery Society had not accepted the ambitious goals of world-wide abolition and especially not of American abolition, which were the goals adopted by the new society. During Stuart's three-year absence in pursuit of these goals, the divisions had widened.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the activities of George Thompson, the letters of Charles Stuart kept the interest in American abolition alive in Britain. The attention of the new society, however, found itself focusing on the disturbing reports about the functioning of the apprenticeship scheme in the former slave colonies, which was an veiled attempt to provide "training" while nonetheless maintaining the slavery system. They were more convinced than ever that the more cautious methods of the Anti-Slavery Society were not effective. After agreeing to press for a parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, the new society was enraged when Thomas Buxton allowed his demands for the inquiry to be brushed aside in the House of

Commons by government assurances that abuses in the apprenticeship system were minor and already being remedied.<sup>2</sup>

For a time, the most public issue between the two antislavery groups concerned Mauritius. The absence of reliable statistics about actual slave numbers and the continuation of illegal slave trading made it difficult for the government to accurately figure the portion of compensation owed to the island out of the twenty million pounds that had been awarded to the former slave colonies. Buxton provoked a published denial from the Universal Abolition Society when he claimed to represent all abolitionists in offering to support the claims of the Mauritian planters if they would agree to end apprenticeship.<sup>3</sup> Continuing reports of major problems in the West Indies overshadowed the Mauritius issue. The end of slavery had apparently done nothing to end the cruelty of the labor system. Reports of floggings continued on the island of Jamaica, and a new form of punishment, the treadmill, had been introduced to make the conditions perhaps worse than ever. Reports, many from missionaries, suggested that a factor of major importance was that most of the special magistrates, who had been introduced to the apprenticeship system, had aligned themselves with the planters rather than with the former slaves.<sup>4</sup>

The abolitionists believed that, although the apprenticeship period had justified their confidence that there would be no slave uprising following emancipation, it confirmed their suspicions that the planters would do everything in their power to keep a system of slavery intact. The more the reports from the West Indies demanded further action in light of the new revelations, the greater the differences in approach between the two factions of the antislavery movement.

According to one of the leading historians of the British antislavery movement, Howard Temperley, the options were to work through Parliament, as Buxton and the Anti-Slavery Society preferred, or to take the more radical approach of a nation-wide campaign to bring popular pressure upon the government. As Temperley argues, the situation was strikingly similar to that which existed in 1832-1833, except that, on that earlier occasion, the Anti-Slavery Society had not entirely neglected wider public support as it did in the struggle against apprenticeship. A good case could be made, however, in light of what has been argued earlier about what led to the founding of the Agency Committee, that the parallels between the two periods seem closer than Temperley suggests. He points out that, in late 1835, at the time when the issues and policy alternatives were becoming clear, the radical Universal Abolition Society disappeared. Its disappearance is puzzling, and the lack of records offers no possibility of a solution. But that provincial abolitionists took the lead in organizing the national campaign represents a striking similarity to the trends that had preceded the foundation of the Agency Committee. As a subcommittee of the national society, the success of the Agency Committee came about because of provincial experimentation and pressure. In much the same way, a campaign of provincial agitation against apprenticeship led to a national convention in London. As Temperley further points out, there was one other similarity between the two periods. The campaign against apprenticeship relied heavily on the services of George Thompson, John Scoble, and Joseph Sturge, all of whom had been activists in the Agency Committee era. But it also drew on the energies of Charles

Stuart, who, after years in America, was as experienced an abolitionist as any in the world.<sup>5</sup>

While the similarities between the two periods are striking, for his part, Charles Stuart did not play the same innovative role in the campaign against apprenticeship as he had in the agitation leading up to the Emancipation Act. Without question, the leading instigator in the opposition to apprenticeship was Joseph Sturge, secretary of the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society. At the same time as Stuart was experiencing anti-abolitionist violence in and around Utica, Sturge was launching the new British campaign with a mass meeting in Birmingham, followed by other demonstrations. His efforts were limited by the lack of accurate information he had regarding the situation in the West Indies. Sources close to the situation in the West Indies were reluctant to speak for fear of retaliation. In March of 1836, Parliament finally appointed a Committee of Inquiry to investigate the matter. After four months of investigating conflicting evidence, however, they produced an unhelpful report that minimized the existence of abuse and offered virtually no recommendations for any improvement in laboring conditions. Frustrated by this report, Sturge decided to initiate his own fact-finding mission to the West Indies. Sturge took with him Thomas Harvey and William Lloyd, two other Birmingham Quakers, and the former Agency Committee lecturer and secretary of the Universal Abolition Society, John Scoble.<sup>6</sup> At the conclusion of his mission, Sturge met Charles Stuart in New York, in May of 1837. While there is no record of their discussions, there is little reason to doubt that the meeting included the plans for Stuart to resume campaigning, once he returned to Britain. Stuart and Sturge had known each

other from at least the time of the formation of the Agency Committee. Sturge, being a leader in the Birmingham antislavery movement, must have been aware of Stuart's campaign opposing Elliot Cresson. Another connection was Sturge's father-in-law, James Cropper, who had been one of Stuart's major allies in the war against Cresson. Further evidence that the two had a close working relationship is contained in a letter written by John Collins, an agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and a fierce Garrison supporter, which referred to Stuart as an "ignorant tool of Joseph Sturge."<sup>7</sup>

Stuart's relationship with George Thompson during this same period and beyond needs no further elaboration. It should be noted, however, that the sponsorship of Thompson's mission by the abolitionists of Glasgow and Edinburgh and the publicity he received after his visit to the United States, helped to keep abolitionism alive, particularly in Glasgow after the Emancipation Act. The same cannot be said of Ireland, a one-time Stuart stronghold. Despite the anger that accompanied the awarding of compensation and the acceptance of apprenticeship, the two most prominent antislavery societies, Dublin and Belfast, had disintegrated following the achievement of the Emancipation Act.<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that Scotland rather than Ireland responded more quickly to the new campaign organized by Joseph Sturge. Public meetings began to be organized by the Glasgow Emancipation Society. Soon, however, Thompson would make his way to Ireland, and, thanks in part to old Agency Committee connections there, antislavery was revived in Ireland. Thompson's success in both Ireland and Scotland would prove important to Stuart's subsequent activities in two contrasting ways. In the short term, largely as a result of

Thompson's continual efforts, Stuart became engaged in the newly energized antislavery activities in Scotland and Ireland. What would become significant in future developments, however, was that Thompson, in energizing the one-time strongholds of Scotland and Ireland, was in fact creating strongholds of future support surrounding the controversy in which Stuart and Thompson would be leading opponents.<sup>9</sup>

While there are few specific details of Stuart's activities, there is evidence to suggest that Stuart's antislavery activity during this period showed him continuing to cooperate with female abolitionists. This would be a further source of confusion and anger to his opponents when this issue would become bitter and divisive within the antislavery movement. At an antislavery meeting in Darlington, where delegates were to be chosen to attend a national convention in London, it is reported that:

Captain Stuart again and again begged the Committee to send up a female delegate. 'If there be a lady,' he continued, 'who has the head and heart to represent you, I am sure she will be joyfully received, and they will thank heaven for sending her.'<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the itinerant activities over the previous few months by men such as Sturge, Thompson, and Stuart, as well as countless local abolitionists, hundreds of abolitionists arrived in London in November of 1837. With a general election due, the time seemed ripe for a full revival of the Agency Committee's methods of sensitizing the public and thus parliamentary opinion. The convention formed a new coordinating body, the Central Negro Emancipation Committee, and agreed to publish a newspaper, the *British Emancipator*, to publicize the new cause.<sup>11</sup> Charles Stuart was not formally part of the new organization. This does



not imply that his role was not significant. The same can be said of Sturge and Thompson, who were also not official members of the new committee. It suggests that their roles were more hands-on and less administrative. Stuart's role would become more administrative seven months later, when the campaign had been successfully completed. His attitudes are made clear in a letter to Weld two months after the formation of the new organization. Stuart said the "glorious work" was progressing, and, in contrast to his American experiences, "no physical opposition molests us." But still success was far from inevitable.

The English people are prepared for the extirpation of colonial slavery...but they are prepared, as fertile earth, yet unploughed, is prepared for the plough. But our ploughing equipments are miserably defective! We have but a fraction of the force in the field, which the work demands. God indeed is working mightily by that fraction, and doing wonders by it...and should the object be obtained, it will be eminently his work.<sup>12</sup>

In this same letter, Stuart also revealed why the work would be personally difficult. Both his personal and financial resources were being strained. As he put it, the greatest problem was "the extreme narrowness of my means in the light of the call." He also admitted that he lacked his "former vigor" and alluded to his experiencing feelings of ineffectiveness during his last year in the United States. It pained him that, "whatever I do, I do with a blighted effort...and many things which my soul would exult in doing, I cannot even attempt."<sup>13</sup>

Despite Stuart's sense of inadequacy, there was never any question that he would participate in the new campaign to the best of his ability. In fact, Stuart goes on in the same letter by consoling himself with the thought that financial and physical frailties were "properly considered...not my concern...and that my proper business is, to occupy my talent, without being disheartened because it is not ten."

This determination stands out because the same correspondence reveals that duty to the cause was pursued at the expense of his devotion to Weld, which was as strong as ever. He apologized to Weld for being “so hatefully and contemptibly defective in my correspondence” and then went on:

Why do you, or anybody, love me? I sometimes almost wish that you did not, so vividly do I feel the painful evidences of my own unworthiness...but oh, what loss were mine, could you cease to love me! But this is out of the question. I know that we are united, one with each other & with our Lord, for ever, unless I apostasize; and then I would not have you with me for worlds.<sup>14</sup>

As Stuart was writing, a letter was en route to him from Weld that would further challenge his devotion to the antislavery cause. Weld and Angelina Grimké were going to be married, and they wanted to delay the wedding until Stuart could be with them. They were also inviting Stuart to share their new home. Stuart’s response was predictably emotional:

Yes, Theodore, you are mine...and I m yours...God made us one from the beginning.... And Angelina is my Sister...she always was my sister...now she is doubly so...I know not a more sacred joy that God could have given me on earth, than by your union. My soul would not have leaped more with gratitude and love, had he given me an equal blessing! [But in encouraging them not to delay for his return] The principle is wrong...the feeling is idolatrous, most generous & pure & tender tho’ it be.... Theodore your heart’s own Charles, says you must not delay.<sup>15</sup>

He was no less moved by the offer to share their house. “Had I let loose my imagination to fabricate a castle in the clouds, I could not have desired a sweeter and nobler one, than the share to which you invite me, in your new abode.” But he could not be sure of his ability to accept for some time, not until late in 1838 at the earliest and possibly not until May or June of the following year. At such time, their reunion would be even sweeter, because it had been delayed:

...by the claims of love.... Ah, what claims are those! how they ring through the heart, in the cry of our brother's blood...in the ceaseless wail of his stricken [sic] heart...in the leer & he sneer & the scoff & the curse of his oppressor!<sup>16</sup>

The public campaign to which Stuart was so devoted was underway. Apprenticeship was seen by the abolitionists as nothing more than a continuation of slavery. On February 20, Lord Brougham startled the House of Lords with an attack on the planters and a demand for the end of apprenticeship. While he was easily outvoted, his demand was nonetheless an embarrassment to the government, specifically Lord Glenelg, who had recently congratulated the colonial governors on how well the apprenticeship program was operating. Glenelg responded to Lord Brougham's attack by promising specific solutions to specific abuses but held firm to the announced timetable for apprenticeship in the belief that premature abolition would introduce racial and social confusion in the colonial societies.<sup>17</sup>

Although the government had been shaken out of its indifference to the reported abuses in apprenticeship, the nation-wide agitation by the Central Negro Emancipation Committee had to maintain the pressure to gain real concessions. In addition to a nation-wide assault through meetings and lectures from the committee, the publication of *The West Indies in 1837*, by Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, detailed the many abuses in the apprenticeship program. Howard Temperley has written that this campaign was "a repeat performance of that of 1832-33," with petitions and remonstrances pouring into Parliament from meetings and antislavery societies old and new, but "even the performers were the same." While Thompson aroused Scotland by addressing meetings and

organizing committees, "Sturge, Scoble, and their associates did the same in England."<sup>18</sup> In fact, the similarities may be even more pronounced than Temperley suggests in that, just as in 1832-1833, Charles Stuart was again actively campaigning in Ireland as Thompson and Sturge were campaigning in Scotland and England.

The modesty of Stuart combined with a lack of Irish antislavery records make the details of his activities elusive. That petitions began pouring into Parliament from all over Great Britain leads to the conclusion that Stuart was successful. While the government was forced to respond to these demands by offering reforming measures, the abolitionists would be satisfied with nothing less than immediate abolition of apprenticeship. It is very likely that Stuart, with his vast network of friends throughout not only Britain but America as well, was informed as to any developments in Parliament. And as the petitions and remonstrances continued to flood into London, the parliamentary votes began to swing toward the abolitionists' demands.

In a stark contrast to Lord Brougham's overwhelming defeat in the House of Lords in February, by late March, a vote in the House of Commons was lost by a narrow margin. The turning point came on May 22, when the House of Commons narrowly passed a resolution by Sir Eardley Wilmot, calling for the end of apprenticeship on August 1. Although, as Temperley writes, this was "a snap division in a thinly attended House," it was also the result of careful planning by the radical campaigners. Just prior to the vote, the Central Negro Emancipation Committee had urged its members to be present in London on May 19, in preparation for the vote on May 22.<sup>19</sup>

Stuart was back in London at the time of the vote. Among the many friends and acquaintances Stuart met there was Richard Allen, an Irish Quaker, who was the secretary of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society, who sailed with his wife from Dublin to Liverpool and then arrived in London. Years later, Mrs. Allen provided a vivid description of:

...that memorable reunion in London which did not separate until the voice of the people, through their representatives in Parliament assembled, declared that the fetters should be knocked off the limbs of the miscalled apprentices in the 1st of August.<sup>20</sup>

It was, she recalled, "a spirit-stirring time." Despite careful planning, the actual moment of division in Parliament came with unexpected speed. Many delegates' wives were quietly dining, not expecting to see their husbands before morning, when a sudden clamor of shouting and bell-ringing demanded their attention. In the midst of all the cheering and confusion, the words were distinguishable, "A glorious majority of three; we have gained our cause!"<sup>21</sup> Mrs. Allen continued:

...while our spirits were thus elated, and we were as noisy and uproarious and as confused as Babel, in glided one who may well be called the apostle of the negro, Captain Charles Stuart...and amid the uproar he calmly said, 'Let us kneel down and return thanks to God for having thus inclined the hearts of our representatives to the side of mercy.' All was hushed in a moment. The Christian knelt and prayed; he prayed for the oppressor and the oppressed fervently and impressively. Soon we all retired.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the joy of the abolitionists, the government could still have resisted. On May 22, within one week, the vote was overturned by another House of Commons vote. While seen as a setback, the abolitionists were making an impact, and the effects were being realized in the colonies. The planters could sense the erosion of their support in Parliament and were increasingly suspicious

of any commitments coming out of London. They also recognized that agitation in Britain was unsettling to the black population of the West Indies and that it would reach dangerous levels by August 1 when apprentices would gain their freedom. In fact, even before May 22, more than half of the colonial legislatures had unilaterally abandoned apprenticeship, and, over the next two months, the remainder, including the crucial island of Jamaica, followed suit.<sup>23</sup> It must be noted that, while the government passed the Emancipation Act, freeing the slaves in the West Indies, working-class advocates argued that it was at the expense of the British worker, who was taxed for the twenty million pounds of compensation. On July 6, 1833, the *Poor Man's Guardian* announced that the settlement was "extracted from the bones of the white slaves in England, Ireland and Scotland." This is not to imply, however, that the working class was unsympathetic to the plight of the slaves; rather, it was believed that slave-holders should have been punished rather than compensated.<sup>24</sup>

With the great national campaign to end apprenticeship effectively won, Stuart accepted an administrative position in London as the acting secretary of the Central Negro Emancipation Committee. This was only a temporary position. Following the victory over colonial slavery, the British antislavery movement would now go through a period of reorganization and clarification of objectives. The Central Negro Emancipation Committee was about to be replaced by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Charles Stuart was so well respected that he was named the first honorary life member of the new society, and he would also become one of its most active organizers.<sup>25</sup>

American abolitionists greeted the news of their British counterparts' triumph with great joy and pride. *The Friend of Man* attributed the success of the campaign to the "labors of such men as Charles Stuart and George Thompson." It then issued a call for them to return to the United States, proclaiming that "England can spare them now. Jamaica can spare them."<sup>26</sup> Specifically, Garrison suggested that the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society should invite the two men to return, a proposal soon endorsed by an anonymous correspondent who suggested that, in addition, Joseph Sturge be included in the invitation.<sup>27</sup>

Charles Stuart was hardly indifferent to American trends, and he was influenced by the pull of his personal attachments. On July 18, 1838, he wrote to Theodore and Angelina Weld. He wanted to hear about them personally but also about the prospects of the cause in America. In particular, he wanted to hear about a women's antislavery convention held in Philadelphia, attended by Angelina and disrupted by a mob while Garrison was speaking. Despite his interest in the American situation, he made no mention of a possible reunion. While he said nothing about his next adventure, he gave a clue in his warning that, despite the end of apprenticeship, "much more & horrible abuse, will still be perpetrated & for years will call for the prayers & supervision & efforts of all who love God & their neighbours."<sup>28</sup> It is unknown if at that time he had any definite plans, but most assuredly he would want to be a part of any supervision. In fact, the next stage in his extensive travels would be to the source of much of the British controversy: the West Indies.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp. 24-41.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 129-161.
- <sup>5</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp. 24-41.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Collins to Maria Weston Chapman, December 3, 1840, in Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 128.
- <sup>8</sup> Riach, "Ireland and American Slavery," p. 49.
- <sup>9</sup> Riach, pp. 56-60.
- <sup>10</sup> Comments by John A. Collins, cited in *Liberator*, May 21, 1841, p. 82.
- <sup>11</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 39.
- <sup>12</sup> Stuart to Weld, February 23, 1838, Weld Papers.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> Stuart to Weld, March 8, 1838, Weld Papers.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 40; Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, pp. 154-157.
- <sup>18</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 39.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- <sup>20</sup> Mrs. Allen's account is reprinted in Hannah Maria Wigham, *A Christian Philanthropist of Dublin: A Memoir of Richard Allen*, London, 1886, pp. 22-24.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp. 40-41.
- <sup>24</sup> Betty Fladeland, *Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems*, Baton Rouge, 1984, p. 59.
- <sup>25</sup> Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Weld-Grimké Letters*, II, p. 701, n. 3.
- <sup>26</sup> Cited in *Liberator*, July 27, 1838, p. 119.



<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, August 17, 1838, p. 130.

<sup>28</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 18, 1838, Weld Papers.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CHRONICLING A CRIMINAL SYSTEM**

In late 1838, conditions in the West Indies were unstable. Although the island legislatures had ended apprenticeship, most had done so reluctantly in response to the campaign of the Central Negro Emancipation Committee. The speed at which emancipation became a reality compounded the problems on the islands. Since the Emancipation Act, it was apparent that the end of slavery would demand social, political, and economic reform in the islands. The apprenticeship phase offered an opportunity to develop a plan of implementation of these reforms. That the end of apprenticeship came two years ahead of schedule caught many on the islands unprepared. Although both local authorities as well as those in London shared a desire to maintain a plantation economy, they differed fundamentally in their attitudes toward the black labor force. The determination of the Colonial Office to protect the liberties of the emancipated slaves led to an all-out disallowance of colonial legislation, which, in the autumn of 1838, replaced the old slave codes with measures designed to preserve planter control over the work force.<sup>1</sup>

Within the islands, conditions varied. With the exception of three island colonies, St. Lucia, Trinidad, and British Guiana, which were directly ruled by the crown, tensions between planters and British policy-makers related both to the

general principle of British interference and to specific measures. From November of 1838, Charles Stuart spent the next seventeen months in the West Indies. On his trip, Stuart was accompanied by John Scoble and Mr. A. L. Palmer, two other stalwarts of the Central Negro Emancipation Committee. Theirs was a fact-finding mission, with the aim of ascertaining accurate information about the state of the former slaves and to encourage the reform efforts underway in the colonies. Before sailing for the West Indies, Stuart wrote to Theodore Weld, expressing his realistic assumptions about the trip. He expressed his concern that:

...should He, whom we serve, call me home on the way, then I wish you and Gerrit Smith, to whom I write with this, to inquire after my beloved sister Mrs. Mary Rankin of Toronto, U. Canada and her daughters Susan and Catherine, and be friends to them for your Charles' sake. I know how cordially your noble wife will concur in your doing so.<sup>2</sup>

Stuart arrived in Barbados on November 15 to learn of a past summer of extreme heat and more recent epidemics of fever. The weather conditions had been moderated by tropical storms, and Stuart and his party concerned themselves with the island's social conditions. Within hours of their arrival, they were given a reminder of the recent tensions by the arrival of a ship carrying troops which had been stationed at the other side of the island for the past three and a half months in readiness for the violence, which the authorities had expected would accompany the August 1 expiration of apprenticeship. However, Stuart was delighted to discover that, although the whites had overreacted:

...the emancipated labourers, as they themselves pleasantly expressed it, were 'making 'en 'shamed of it,' by behaving with a propriety so remarkable as to exert applause even from their enemies, and to equal the best hopes of their friends.<sup>3</sup>

While Stuart expressed optimism, he qualified it by also expressing the need for continued vigilance. He had found that liberty was “more effectually recognised” than he had expected, and that:

The emancipated labourer, I am induced to believe, is generally safe in his person and has largely a free control of his time. His wages are small, but moderately competent: he is sensibly beginning to assume the stature of a man, and generally with great gentleness and kindness.<sup>4</sup>

Problems persisted, however, mostly in the area of housing. While small cottages were being constructed all over the island, they were held under a kind of tenure, which left the tenants completely subject to their former masters. Because Stuart knew that reforms would take a long time to implement, he believed that, just as had been the case in Britain and in the United States, the pressure of an informed and concerned public offered the best hope of continuing the reform process. Stuart said:

If the nation will do its duty, I believe that the colonial office will, in good measure, fulfill theirs. And if the colonial office [will] do its duty with the manly energy which the case demands, I see the fairest prospects before the island.<sup>5</sup>

Convinced that the victory of emancipation could still be undone “if we leave the colonies to themselves, as though the work were done,” Stuart saw as the first priority the appointment of a “suitable special magistracy, made independent of the gentry of the islands.”<sup>6</sup>

On November 27, Stuart and Scoble attended an “Emancipation Dinner” as the guests of honor. According to the Barbados *Liberal*, the dinner was the “greatest social party Barbados had ever witnessed.”<sup>7</sup> The organizers had planned for 200 guests, and twice that number crammed into the Boys’ School Room, and

many more were unable to gain entry. Nobody came simply for the dinner, rather "to be there was the aim and end of desire." Yet, despite the swelling crowd, there was "not a symptom of disorder," and when it came time to sit down:

There they stood, in double and treble ranks, many of them men who were three months ago degraded slaves, beaming satisfaction and enthusiasm from their countenances, and here and there, politely declining the offers made by their friends who had obtained seats to vacate those seats for their accommodation!<sup>8</sup>

Despite the jubilant evening, Stuart remained wary of the planter government as presenting a serious threat to the island's happiness. In a letter to Weld, Stuart wrote:

The emancipated classes view their present condition with delight... "Mass freedom too sweet" ... "too much better" ... "too good 'tory [?]" ... "Bless de ladies in England" "Bless Queen Victoria, who give me free" "If dem keep me 'prentice till forty, we all dead" "Bless de Lord, for me free," are amongst the expressions with which they ardently greet us. Yet they are still subjected to many oppressions. When charged with offences before the local Magistrates, they are not permitted to produce evidence in rebutter [sic]. When any of them refuses labour on the estate at the wages offered, he or she is summarily ejected; their huts broken open, or broken up, sometimes burned, and their furniture thrown out upon the public roads.... The Planter Government is the only serious obstacle to the more perfect happiness of the Island. By the Planter Government, I mean that large and commanding share which the Planters hold in the Legislative branches of the general Government, together with police, Magisterial and Judicial authorities, which are almost altogether in their hands. Their influence in Legislation has at once prevented the appointment to the Magistracy of stipendiary officers not themselves concerned in Colonial Interests; and the institution of Juries in litigation between employers and labourers: while, their executive Magisterial power, constituting them, in all ordinary case, Judge, Jury and Executioner, there can be no such thing generally speaking as fair play in law or practice.<sup>9</sup>

Stuart was concerned that the post-slavery stability he and the other abolitionists had predicted could be in jeopardy if abuses continued. While

visiting Tobago, Stuart addressed emancipated laborers, offering them encouragement and a challenge. He thought it necessary to vindicate the idea promoted by abolitionists that free labor was better economically than was slave labor. "Show all," he urged the blacks, "that liberty makes better labourers than slavery, and the honourable and happy motives of freedom produce better industry than all the powers of slavery can do." He urged the freed slaves to be law-abiding, so that no one had reason to accuse them of being "idle, or disorderly, or troublesome."<sup>10</sup>

As was his custom, Stuart placed a great deal of emphasis on religion. Marriage was to be extolled, and the Sabbath was to be honored. The emancipated laborers should obtain Bibles as soon as possible. All of this was fundamental and consistent with his understanding of religion and abolitionism. What strongly emerged in his lecture, however, for the first time, was his concern for racial harmony, accompanied by an ethnocentric contempt for African barbarism. He blamed slavery for the proliferation of "adulterers and whoremongers," who would earn God's wrath. But he reacted puritanically to the imported profanities, "such as your bellie dance," a practice Stuart encouraged them to forsake. He argued:

Cultivate a better taste that you and your children may have better pleasures. One chief reason why Africa has been so long plundered of her children is, that the people of Africa still keep themselves in ignorance and vice by such practices.<sup>11</sup>

Although he did not use this argument during his confrontations with the American Colonization Society, it is an attitude that reveals what was perhaps a major underlying reason for his strong opposition to colonization. It was not an

unusual attitude for the time or for one whose strong evangelical piety guided his actions. It also made logical his subsequent support of the African Civilization Society, an organization that was soon to emerge as Buxton's solution to the problem of redirecting abolitionist energies, and which was suspected by many abolitionists as a colonizationist Trojan horse.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout his West Indian travels, Stuart would remain in close contact with Joseph Sturge. He wrote to him twice in early December from Barbados, again on Christmas Day from Tobago, and on January 5 from St. Vincent.<sup>13</sup> Following a brief return to Barbados in January of 1839, Stuart departed with Scoble on a two-month visit to British Guiana. Unlike Scoble, who managed to evoke controversy in his public meetings, Stuart managed to be well received by the master class. But Stuart seemed determined to uphold the plantation economy, while at the same time admonishing the emancipated laborers not to become idle and thus fuel the pro-slavery arguments that blacks would only work if forced. Stuart would admit privately to Weld that he was impressed with the resolve of the blacks in British Guiana and not nearly as critical of them as his lecture suggested.<sup>14</sup> For the moment at least, the line Stuart had adopted would make him a popular figure among the master class.

By late March, Stuart was in Trinidad to observe the situation there, and his reactions were quite favorable. He spoke to members of the master class as well as to a number of emancipated laborers, arguing for the survival of the plantation economy under the new conditions of free labor, stating:

I adore the gracious Providence which enables me to say, that the state of this island disappoints my fears, and vastly exceeds my expectations. The general condition of your labouring classes, at

this moment, is happy almost beyond compare. I am perfectly satisfied, that it is now the universal effort of the masters to hire labour at fair and liberal rates; and I am equally convinced, that, as generally as can be reasonably expected, it is the desire of the labourers to find employment at the same, especially on their former plantation.<sup>15</sup>

His audience was naturally delighted. According to the *Trinidad Standard*:

The lecture was received not only with marked respect, but with many demonstrations of approbation. It evidenced an extensive inquiry, an anxiety for attaining the truth, and a greater degree of impartiality than we could have anticipated.<sup>16</sup>

From Trinidad, Stuart sailed north in late April to spend two months in the Windward and Leeward Islands, visiting Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica, Antigua, Monserrat, St. Kitts, Nevis, and Tortola. What can be understood from the copy of his long letter, in which he reported on his experiences to both American and British abolitionists, is that this proved to be the most satisfying portion of his trip. As in Trinidad, his enthusiasm seems to have impressed and possibly relieved the local white establishments. He continued his practice of making close contact with the leading officials and planters, and his optimism seemed to grow with each visit to a new island.

Future trends in the West Indies, however, could lead to the speculation that his enthusiasm was naive. There certainly appeared to be some wishful thinking on Stuart's part in discovering the proper ingredients that abolitionists had prescribed as necessary and possible in a post-slavery environment. He witnessed enough to give him a sense of hope and optimism. He found, in some cases, education being organized and churches flourishing, and he did see cottages being built and workers who were happy.<sup>17</sup> But it would be unfair to see Stuart as merely a pawn of plantation interests or as one unable to see through a handful of



positive examples to the larger and existing problems. Despite Stuart's close contact with the white establishment, his overriding concern was for the welfare of the black population, and his highest praise was for their conduct in situations that still left much room for improvement. He wrote to Weld:

Had I time and strength, I could write you things that would cheer your soul in relation to the population of these islands. Generally speaking, they are a noble race of men; with grievous faults indeed; but with eminently admirable qualities. One of the three great charges brought against them, that if freed at once in body they would be: 1. revengeful, 2. vagabond and 3. idle; the two first are acknowledged by every body to be totally disproved, and a fair enquiry into every fact is all that is requisite as abundantly to disprove the latter. Their intelligence, whether cultivated or not, their peacefulness, their docility, and their sobriety, are amongst their prominent characteristics.<sup>18</sup>

In his travels, Stuart delighted in reporting of the success stories he discovered. He reported meeting a black man named Conrad, who had been emancipated only the previous August. Conrad was now "a head labourer on a sugar plantation, who boards and lodges in his own cottage, an intelligent poor white man and pays him for further instructing him in reading, writing and arithmetic."<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps he delighted in reporting the positive signs of success because he knew that such men were unusual and that planters' attitudes had not changed so dramatically as to allow even exceptional blacks the opportunities to advance themselves. At every stage of his progress through the Windward and Leeward Islands, his optimism was based on the existence of the impartial stipendiary magistracy which he had found crucially lacking in Barbados. In St. Kitts, the stipendiaries had been the "great healers of the deep wounds inflicted upon the labouring population by the atrocities of August 1834," when militiamen had

enforced martial law and driven runaways back to the plantations. Monserrat, however, surpassed all colonies "in the security enjoyed by its people, in their houses, on the plantations, and in the fruits of their provision grounds" because of the "happy, just and powerful influence there of the stipendiary, Warren." In Dominica, Stuart was pleased to discover that one stipendiary magistrate was Joseph Phillips, his ally during the campaign against Elliot Cresson some years earlier. His job made Phillips "one of the most importantly useful men in the island." Stuart's praise for Phillips should be seen as more than loyalty to an old friend; rather, his support for stipendiaries is also expressed in his relating of a situation where a conflict between an estate manager and his labor force had been resolved by another stipendiary named Lynch. In keeping with these anecdotes, Stuart ended his lengthy report to Weld and Sturge from Basseterre, St. Kitts, on June 8, with a quotation allegedly from a local stipendiary whose words sound remarkably like his own:

'Let England continue to watch and support us. I feel that I need such supervision, both to animate me to duty, and to encourage and sustain me in its performance. These colonies need the controlling and purifying influences of the British and the Christian heart, as much to evolve with real benefit to all the glorious law of liberty, as they did, the same, to extirpate the slave system, so nefarious and hateful.'<sup>20</sup>

Because the two months since leaving Trinidad had been difficult and strenuous, Stuart needed to possess such optimism and enthusiasm to keep his momentum. He had been travelling alone since Scoble's illness prevented him from travelling. Something of his loneliness was conveyed by the enthusiasm with which he looked for news from friends. In early June, his heart had been "panting for intelligence from Britain and America." He had been excited to

receive in St. Kitts letters from Sturge, Theodore, Angelina, and his dear friends, William and Mary Blair. He wrote:

My soul is refreshed. I bless the Lord. Oh how sweet and magnanimous, and rich and unwearied is His love to us. He alone can know, all the love and the praise which we owe Him; and He alone could bear the glory which is His due, without a thought of elation. Oh how excellent beyond compare, how perfect is our God! Our God! unchangeably ours! bound to us by His own blood, poured out in love!<sup>21</sup>

He thought he needed such refreshment and reminded Angelina that he was now “verging on 60, is weary and worn, and only half a man.” He apologized for not writing more often. This comment should not be seen as self-pity or an indication of imminent physical collapse. In fact, Stuart’s letters contain very little mention of his own physical deprivation. Stuart had briefly thought about ending his journey early and sailing for England. While he quickly rejected any such notion, his further comments reveal the strain of travel, as he apologized again to Weld and Sturge for the inadequacies of his report. He wrote:

This disorder you will readily and kindly account for when you remember the constant urgency of getting onward which is upon me, that I am overwhelmed with occupation during my stay, that nausea at sea unfits me for every thing, and that the utmost which I have energy to do, beyond the imperative and ceaseless urgency of daily and local occupation, is to scrawl, rather [than] to write the few letters, which I have written.<sup>22</sup>

With his rejection of an earlier departure for England, Stuart planned to sail to Jamaica, stopping in Nevis, Tortola, and Cape Haitien along the way. His plan was to spend only a short time in Jamaica, but the situation there was too complex and challenging to allow only a short visit.

It was in Jamaica, Britain’s largest and most populated Caribbean colony, that resentment over the end of apprenticeship had been the most bitter.

Receiving no compensation for the loss of two years' expected compulsory labor and with the colony abruptly losing the poll tax on apprentices, the Jamaica planter oligarchy faced considerable economic problems. Their objections, however, were most vocal against the wider political and constitutional implications of British control. Much of the assembly's legislation for the post-apprenticeship period had already been disallowed before August 1, 1838. Then, within that same month, the British Parliament passed the West Indian Prisons Act, which seemed even further to emphasize the subordinate status of the colonial legislature. The act followed an inquiry into British West Indian prisons, which revealed grossly unsanitary and unsecured conditions. The West Indian oligarchies tended to accept the need for reforms, pointing out that public prisons had assumed a new importance because most discipline had previously been administered privately on the plantations. The Jamaican assembly deeply resented having reform imposed from the outside rather than being allowed to initiate its own reforms. As a result, Jamaica announced a moratorium on all public business until the act was withdrawn.<sup>23</sup>

Sir Lionel Smith, the governor of Jamaica, dissolved the assembly in November of 1838. The new elections returned an assembly even more vocal in its condemnation of British interference. Smith may have overreacted to the opposition when he predicted future violence by planter-led militia tyrannizing the black population. But he was well aware that the principles of freedom and legislative independence were being invoked by a body elected by fewer than 2,000 voters from a population of 350,000. His recommendation that the assembly be removed received some support from the Colonial Office, where one

school of thought considered that a uniform system of crown colony government would best protect the interests of the emancipated West Indian blacks. The powerful permanent under-secretary, James Stephen, however, was committed to the principle of representative government, even though he was a strong supporter of Negro freedom. Responding to his advice, the cabinet of Lord Melbourne adopted the compromise measure of suspending the Jamaican constitution for five years rather than permanently abolishing the assembly.<sup>24</sup>

This course was even more controversial, because of the suspension of the constitution of Lower Canada the year before. The leader of the opposition, Robert Peel, stressed the demoralizing effects of such suspensions on colonial opinion throughout the empire, and he was joined in his denunciation by a disparate group from across the political spectrum. There were radical supporters of the government, who were prepared to withdraw their support because of the issue of colonial liberty. There was Lord Brougham, normally a staunch supporter of the blacks but carrying a grudge against Melbourne for excluding him from his second ministry. And there were arch conservatives such as the Duke of Wellington and the traditional supporters of the West Indian interests. Even with the defection of ten Radicals from the government, the opposition was not strong enough to defeat the measure when it was put to the vote in the House of Commons on May 6. Melbourne, however, viewed the narrow five-vote victory as a rebuff and resigned.<sup>25</sup>

The fall of the government was only temporary. Although Melbourne quickly returned to power when Queen Victoria refused to relinquish her ladies-in-waiting and Peel declined to form a government, the effects of the crisis on

Caribbean policy were profound. When a new Jamaican measure received scarcely stronger support, the government decided to abandon all its attempts to coerce the planters. In June of 1839, as Stuart headed toward Jamaica, Sir Lionel Smith was replaced as governor by Sir Charles Metcalfe, who was encouraged to pursue new policies of conciliation. The primary problem in Jamaica, as elsewhere throughout the Caribbean, was maintaining the plantation system now that emancipated slaves had the opportunity to support themselves either by squatting on vacant land or by purchasing freeholds through savings from wages. In effect, the new policies were to involve an attempt to save the plantation system by reinforcing the authority of the planters rather than by attempting to improve conditions for labor.<sup>26</sup>

At the time of Stuart's arrival in Jamaica, these new policies had yet to be introduced, but already the *volte-face* by the imperial government was deeply suspect in antislavery circles. Stuart's associates in the Central Negro Emancipation Committee had strongly supported the suspension of the Jamaican constitution. The June 12 issue of their newspaper, the *British Emancipator*, reported its recent strong resolutions against the rumored decision to recall Sir Lionel Smith, giving strong editorial support to Smith, and condemned the "Jamaican tyrants." With the Jamaican question dominating the news, Stuart at this stage was the source of puzzled concern to his abolitionist friends as reports of his optimistic reactions to conditions in other colonies filtered back to them. The *British Emancipator* carried news of Stuart's April lecture in Trinidad, in which, "if we are to believe the *Trinidad Standard*," he expressed confidence in the future of a plantation economy based on free and equitable master-servant

relations. On June 26, the paper's editorial page informed its readers that "the spirit of oppression...rages dreadfully" in Jamaica and reported the "deepest regret and dismay" at Smith's recall, expressed by Birmingham abolitionists in a memorial to the colonial secretary. The same editorial commented on Stuart's reception in Trinidad with obvious caution. Noting that "the Trinidadians of course exalt him to the skies," the paper remarked that Stuart's favorable view was a source of "unfeigned pleasure," which would be even greater "if information from other sources shall altogether corroborate it."<sup>27</sup>

If British abolitionists were fearful that Stuart was becoming a mouthpiece for the planter class, their minds were eased when he sent a detailed description of the Jamaican situation shortly after his arrival. Soon, portions of his findings were published in the *British Emancipator*, which revealed that Stuart had not changed his fundamental beliefs. As much as he desired to see the plantation economy maintained, this desire was subordinate to the priority of racial and social justice. He wrote:

Jamaica is mourning the expected departure of Sir Lionel Smith.... Jamaica is astounded at the ignorance, the feebleness, or the corruption of the government, which removes him, at this time especially. A faction in Jamaica, probably not numbering more than 2000, worshipping still their great idols, sugar and rum, and insanely dreaming that fraud and force are better ways of getting sugar and rum than equity and kindness, is triumphing in the suicidal success of its machinations; but the Lord reigneth, and bids the earth rejoice. The difficulties of this island consist fundamentally in the desire of the proprietors, or their agents, to get as much sugar and rum as possible, with the smallest possible remuneration to the labourers employed; so that instances have abounded in which labourers, after working well and hard for the week, at the end of it have been brought in, sometimes debtors, sometimes with a fraction only of their earnings, on the most unworthy pretences.<sup>28</sup>



Stuart supported these allegations with a detailed analysis of the reasons why the plantation economy was in jeopardy. To some extent, the crucial alienation of the labor force had been the result of the "crazy and criminal apprenticeship system," which had frustrated "immediate and thorough emancipation" in 1834. The "ferocious and insane abuses" that had characterized the apprenticeship period had done much to alienate the blacks. Even then, he was sure, "had they been wisely, firmly, and kindly governed, according to the emancipation law, little or no difficulty would have been found with them."<sup>29</sup>

But the planters had immediately revealed their vindictive attitudes by demanding rent for the initial three-month period of freedom, in which the abolition law had guaranteed the blacks occupancy of their former slave cottages and provision grounds. These demands had been legally upheld by the island attorney general, and bitter disputes had followed on some estates with strikes, destruction of provision grounds, litigation against faulting tenants, and the use of armed police to suppress riots.<sup>30</sup>

While Stuart did not condone violent protests, his detailed descriptions of the situation demonstrated that the inadequate wages and unreasonable rents made the flight from the plantations inevitable. The emancipated slaves were being asked to pay annual rents higher than the freehold value of their cottages and provision grounds. And yet when they found alternatives:

...in the most harmless, lawful, industrious and manly manner, as they usually do, then they are blamed for ingratitude and idleness; the destitution of continuous labour is proclaimed, and the cry of ruin is thundered through the land.<sup>31</sup>



Soon, Stuart realized that these critical conditions demanded a more prolonged investigation. On July 30, he wrote to Weld from Kingston that, because of the condition he had found, he now proposed staying in Jamaica until late November and then returning directly to England instead of going first to New York. Stuart outlined to Weld that the main problem, as he had told the British abolitionists, was found in "the blind selfish attempts made by the slave spirit to get as much service from the poor, with as little remuneration as can by any means be wrung out of them under law under whatever pretences."<sup>32</sup>

While Stuart was preoccupied with his further investigation of abuses in Jamaica, his failure to arrive in New York in July, as he had originally planned, caused some concern among his American friends, until his letter of July 30 reached Weld. Both Grimké sisters wrote expressing their anxiety over his absence. In a letter from Sarah Grimké to Elizabeth Pease, she wrote:

We feel some anxiety about our dear brother Charles Stuart whom we had been expecting for nearly two months as his letter mentions he expected to be in Jamaica about the 23rd of 6th month & sail thence very soon for New York...we conclude that if his life & health have been preserved he would not obtain a passage to the U.S. & has therefore returned to England without coming to America.... This has been no small disappointment, but we rejoice that the good man's steps are ordered of the Lord & doubt not whatever events have occurred to him are in mercy & that all things are working together for his good.<sup>33</sup>

On October 10, Stuart wrote to Weld, demonstrating once again that Weld was Stuart's beloved friend. He wrote:

Why have I not written to you again & again.... Because I am the abortive thing which is called Charles Stuart.... Have I loved you the less?... You know that I have not; and the reason, is the same, except that in this, there is no abortion.... O, how sweet & rich it is, a gift of God.

My delay in this island has thwarted all my temporal plans; and some of them very bitterly...yet even that bitterness is sweet.... I am convinced that it is dutiful; and this, you know, is our soul's delight and shall be through him that loveth & strengtheneth us, however it may crucify our infernal desires.<sup>34</sup>

Stuart's letter of October 10 to Theodore Weld and the same letter to Joseph Sturge two weeks later proved to be a very detailed report to both British and American abolitionists. Although his tone was often optimistic, his report could only have confirmed the misgivings of his antislavery colleagues in Britain. The "Blessing of Jamaica" lay mainly in the "general character and conduct of the labourers" and the "happy & generous influences of the local executive & of the home Government." His British readers knew only too well that the home government, in recalling the local executive, Sir Lionel Smith, had abandoned its attempts to exercise a restraining influence on the Jamaican planters. The bulk of Stuart's report was a chilling assessment of the determination of the ruling class to hold on to their power. "The elective franchise, is miserably circumscribed, and the elected from a malcontent, selfish & dangerous oligarchy." When apprenticeship had ended, the planters had indulged "insane notions" about maintaining a state of virtual slavery, and:

That they still felt like slave-holders.... Even yet, I scarcely find a trace of real repentance amongst them for their enormous crime, in having framed & perpetuated the slave system. They dreamt (the waking and monstrous dream!) that they had nothing to do, but to devise amongst themselves, what wages they would give, and what terms they would propose, and that then, the labourers would have nothing to do, but servilely to follow their devisings.<sup>35</sup>

He gave detailed examples of the terms concocted by two of the most respected planters, pointing out that the "wild clamour" that had arisen against the blacks resulted from their "manly aversion" to such procedures and also to the

attempts by masters to bind them to a form of "villeinage" through the control of cottage rents and tenures. Stuart also conceded that the blacks had made:

...some grievous errors which are not yet completely eradicated. These errors, I need not add, were either prevented or extensively and early corrected in the Churches. These errors consisted in believing that 'Missis Queen', as they call her, had given their cottages, grounds and fruit trees to them; and that their masters were guilty of fraud in keeping them back. Nor was this notion unnatural, tho' perfectly ungrounded; for their cottages had almost all been built by themselves with little or no expence to their masters. The fruit trees had been planted and nurtured by their labour only, and even under slavery had been partially admitted to belong to them; and their grounds were mostly mountain lands, used for no other purpose by their masters. They were also led extensively to believe that nine hours labour per day was too much; because under apprenticeship, that crazy and criminal system of expiring despotism, 7 or 8 hours only had been professedly exacted. I say professedly, because in fact much more was exacted; but the impression conveyed to them was the same; the only difference to them being that they knew they had been defrauded, and they had writhed under it; while keeping distrust of the future was awakened in their minds.<sup>36</sup>

The blacks emerged as heroes in Stuart's report. He wrote of them:

Emancipation was yielded with so slow a hand...and when yielded, was clogged in its operation, by attempts at legislation, so flagrantly unjust, and by measures so repulsive, that I know of no people but the Negroes, who could have borne so much evil, with so little return in kind.<sup>37</sup>

It was the attitudes of the planters that convinced Stuart, however, that some continuing supervision was necessary. He wrote, "Every new inquiry demonstrates to me more and more, the importance of an observer on the spot...and satisfies me, more and more, with my decision to remain."<sup>38</sup>

Over the next four months, Stuart continued to visit all parts of the island, observing the situation, asking questions, and reporting back to his abolitionist friends. Some of his reports came in the form of letters to Joseph Sturge and were

reprinted for British abolitionists in the new *Anti-Slavery Reporter*. He reported cases of continuing abuse and disease, deplorable conditions in jails, and legal injustices at the hands of dishonest magistrates. He reported on cases before the courts, involving the failure of blacks to pay arbitrarily doubled rents as well as rents being charged from each family member occupying the same cottage. He believed that such cases were central to the most basic problems of Jamaica. Blacks were being victimized by their former owners and being tried by local magistrates drawn from the same elite.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps very few of his friends remained optimistic when they read the accounts of his findings in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*. His listing of Jamaican ills was so widespread, and reform seemed so dependent on non-existent British controls, that optimism seemed inappropriate. Yet Stuart remained optimistic, writing:

Many of the estates are gloomily standing still, determined to flourish, as of old, by oppression, or to perish. I cannot fear, indeed, that they will go on to perish, neither can I hope that oppression will altogether cease; but pride knows how to bow to necessity; and God has given to youthful freedom in Jamaica a growth so vigorous, that the weeds seek in vain to overpower her. She is rising beautifully above them all.

Ultimately, however, his optimism came from the potential he saw in blacks themselves. He wrote:

They are too strong in the law, in the churches, in the wants of the estates, in their own ready industry, and in the supervision of Great Britain, to be crushed. They are steadily, peaceably, and irresistibly rising above the lawless freaks of oppression which dash over one another.<sup>40</sup>

Stuart's optimism could easily be seen as simply wishful thinking on his part. His long-held antislavery beliefs, in particular his belief in the superiority of

free over slave labor that he had written about in *The West India Question*, must be seen as a continuing driving force, rather than simple naive optimism on his part. His optimism, however, went beyond a desire to see particular points in his antislavery creed vindicated. Optimism was psychologically essential to maintain the momentum of his activity. Stuart was too honest not to report in full all of the problems he encountered in Jamaica. But, without his strong faith that virtue would ultimately triumph, he would never have completed the investigations that must have been exhausting for a man of his age. At the beginning of his letter to Theodore Weld in early October, he wrote about his desire to see friends and relatives again, and then added, "how my soul craves rest." He admitted that he finds himself tired and concluded the letter by saying, "but I am quickly ashamed of it...and then, Oh, how much sweeter will rest be, when I can dutifully take it."<sup>41</sup>

Stuart was not to find rest in his immediate future, however. As this extract from a letter written to Joseph Sturge in January of 1840 reveals, his pace was impressive for a man of sixty years of age.

On Wednesday, 1st of January, I reached Hampden, Blyth's station, and that evening addressed a large meeting in his church, after laying the corner stone of a new free village, close by his dwelling. On Thursday, I visited with him Mr. George Gordon...distance several miles. On Friday visited Dundee estate, called at Orange Valley, laid the foundation of another new free village, about four or five miles distant. Both of these villages are founded on the tee-total temperance principle, and on both occasions were very large and interesting companies. On Saturday, I went by Bethlephel to Salter's Hill, Dendy's, about twelve or fifteen miles, and on Sunday preached to his congregation, of about 2000 people, and spoke particularly afterwards to the church. On Monday returned from Slater's Hill to Hampden, distant about twelve miles, and attended an exceedingly interesting meeting in the evening in Blyth's church. On Tuesday, went to Bethlephel, and presided in the evening at an anti-slavery meeting in Dendy's church. On Wednesday, rode to breakfast at Montego Bay, distant

about fourteen miles; and in the evening visited Burchell at Mount Carey, distant about nine miles. On Thursday, returned to Montego Bay to breakfast, and hurried over a few indispensable arrangements and inquiries and snatched the first time-fraction for this letter. I am now writing on Thursday evening, the 9th; tomorrow (Friday the 10th) I purpose attending the petty sessions at Adelphi, about eleven miles distant. On Saturday, the petty sessions, and the Mico school here, with personal inquiries from people attending market. On Sunday, 12th preaching in Burchell's church, &c; and on Monday, 13th, going to Mr. Hunter's for statistics....

Sabbath, 12th January, 1840.... It is now about 4 p.m. This is the first day-light hour in which I have had anything like rest since I left Dexter's. I have just returned from preaching as intended, and from partaking of the memorials of the dying love of our blessed Love. My subject was John v. 30. 'My judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of my Father who sent me.' The church, which is symmetrical and spacious, was filled; it seats 2000, there were probably 2500 present...a most decorous and solemn company....

But I must hasten to snatch a fact or two before the light fails. I could give you many particulars that would refresh you, and some that would pain you, in relation to the condition of the negro population, but, admitting every exception, as a body it is well with them.<sup>42</sup>

As diligent as he was in exploring every aspect of the island's situation, it must not be overlooked that Stuart was doing in Jamaica what he had done throughout his antislavery career. At age sixty, Stuart found himself in Jamaica, doing what he had done in Ireland in 1830 and 1831, in England in 1832 and 1833, in the United States from 1834 to 1837, and the British Isles again in 1837 and 1838, namely preaching the abolition gospel and seeking to create a network of antislavery societies. The attempt to link the infant antislavery movement in Jamaica with both American and British abolitionism was typical of Stuart's international perspective. While his extensive travels uniquely qualified him as an expert on the situation around the world, many others during this same period were making a serious effort to foster international antislavery cooperation. His



close associates in the British movement, both before and after the transformation of the Central Negro Emancipation Committee into the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, had for some months been urging his American associates to attend the 1840 British convention. The American response had been favorable, and, by the time Stuart was ready to leave Jamaica, plans were already well developed to make the June convention in London effectively a world antislavery gathering.<sup>43</sup>

It can be stated with almost certainty that Stuart knew of these plans. While there is no direct record of Stuart's receiving letters from Britain, his earlier mention of receiving letters from Sturge and Blair make it improbable that he would be completely unaware of the latest developments in Britain. In the same way, Stuart must have been made aware of the growing tension within the American antislavery movement. The issues dividing the Americans included the role of women, whether or not to seek political solutions, and attitudes toward the Sabbath. William Lloyd Garrison had become an increasingly controversial figure, opposed even in his own state by critics who, in 1839, launched the rival Massachusetts Abolition Society. Although his opponents remained in the minority in New England, their presence made an eventual conflict between the two growing factions of American abolitionism inevitable.<sup>44</sup>

Stuart did change his mind again and visited North America before his return to England as he had originally planned. His visit in late April and early May was a brief one, which was spent mostly visiting family in Canada. He was unable to find the time to visit Gerrit Smith or Theodore and Angelina Weld, who had recently honored him by naming their first child "Charles Stuart." Stuart

sailed for England on May 9 and missed the convention of the American society, which he had attended on four previous occasions.

The convention met three days after Stuart sailed for England, and the Garrisonians made a concentrated effort to mobilize a large turnout of their supporters. Their opponents, sensing the probability of losing control of the national society, took the defensive measure of handing over the society's newspaper, the *Emancipator*, to the New York Anti-Slavery Society, and the society's books to Lewis Tappan and S.W. Benedict. The threatened schism finally occurred when a woman, Abby Kelly, was elected by a substantial majority to the society's business committee. Led by Charles Stuart's old associates, Lewis Tappan and Amos Phelps, large numbers of anti-Garrisonians promptly withdrew from the convention, in effect handing over the national society to the Garrisonians.<sup>45</sup>

Charles Stuart may have opted out of attending the American convention, knowing full well what the outcome would be. But the upcoming London convention, to which Americans of both factions had been invited, meant that the British antislavery movement would not remain untouched by the American controversy.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, pp. 164-175.
- <sup>2</sup> Stuart to Weld, October 15, 1838, Weld Papers.
- <sup>3</sup> Stuart to Sturge, November 22, 1838, reprinted in *British Emancipator*, January 9, 1839, p. 199.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Remarks on the Emancipation Dinner, reprinted from the Barbados *Liberal* in *British Emancipator*, January 9, 1839, p. 198.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Stuart to Weld, December 11, 1838, Weld Papers.
- <sup>10</sup> "Address of Captain Stuart at Tobago," December 26, 1838, reprinted in *British Emancipator*, March 20, 1839, title page.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp. 42-61.
- <sup>13</sup> Stuart's itinerary and information on his discoveries is included in a letter, Stuart to Weld, June 8, 1839, Weld Papers.
- <sup>14</sup> *British Emancipator*, May 15, 1839, title page; Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, no. 2, p. 191; Stuart to Weld, June 8, 1839, Weld Papers.
- <sup>15</sup> *British Emancipator*, June 12, 1839, p. 255.
- <sup>16</sup> "Reprinted in *Ibid.*, June 26, 1839, p. 260.
- <sup>17</sup> Stuart to Weld, June 8, 1839, Weld Papers.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, pp. 164-165.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>27</sup> *British Emancipator*, June 12, 1839, p. 255; June 26, 1839, p. 260.
- <sup>28</sup> *British Emancipator*, July 24, 1839, p. 305.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 30, 1839, Weld Papers.
- <sup>33</sup> Sarah Grimké to Elizabeth Pease, August 25, 1839, in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 83.
- <sup>34</sup> Stuart to Weld, October 10, 1839, Weld Papers.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Stuart to Sturge, January 11, 25, February 4, 1840, reprinted in *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, I, 1840, pp. 61, 70-71.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- <sup>41</sup> Stuart to Weld, October 10, 1839, Weld Papers.
- <sup>42</sup> Stuart to Sturge, January 11, 1840, reprinted in *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, I, 1840, p. 61.
- <sup>43</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p. 85.
- <sup>44</sup> Filler, *Crusade Against Slavery*, pp. 133-135.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **THE WORLD ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION**

The General or World Anti-Slavery Convention in June of 1840, held in London, marked a turning point in the abolitionist career of Charles Stuart. Under different circumstances, it might have been a happy climax to his first decade of antislavery activity. Perhaps no one had worked harder for international cooperation on behalf of the slave, and no one in the antislavery ranks had a better working knowledge of the two major participating countries, Britain and the United States. The occasion turned out to be not a fulfillment of the past but the beginning of future of discord. The recent American split had introduced controversies that came close to destroying the London convention. Under such circumstances, it would have been difficult for any abolitionist to enjoy universal appeal. Stuart's problems, however, ran much deeper. Even in the more harmonious deliberations, the London convention revealed that abolitionism was developing in new directions that would not be to the liking of Stuart, who remained rigidly committed to traditional goals and methods.

By the late 1830s, the American movement was suffering from personal rivalries as well as from regional resentment of centralization in the national society, based in New York. But it became impossible to work in harmony as the two groups of abolitionists developed fundamentally different views on the nature

of a good society and on the objectives and tactics of reform.<sup>1</sup> Duncan Rice argues:

This is not to say that all reasons for antislavery infighting were ideological or tactical; it is not to say that all or even many Britons fully understood the philosophical basis of the American divisions upon which they took sides; and it is not to say that feuds that were originally ideological could not come to perform nonideological functions. Like all political or quasi-political movements with an idealistic base, antislavery developed a leftward momentum that set its most radical supporters at odds with less bold men and women than they had left further back along the continuum. It is not being uncharitable, either, to say that the movement's moral intensity was so great that it tended to produce a sort of anarchical individualism in benevolence. The personal involvement of the evangelical reformer was so deep that he felt entitled to his own moral autonomy, an expectation that did not promote the efficiency of group efforts.<sup>2</sup>

There had always been a difference of style between the evangelical group centered around the Tappan brothers in New York, and the Garrisonian faction in New England. To the Tappans and their associates, it was unsound to mix abolition with other issues. James Birney, for instance, was sure that bringing up women's rights and non-resistance would be "enough to frustrate the whole concern, no matter how strong it may be."<sup>3</sup> But these were the issues, along with slavery, that Garrison insisted on pressing. The assumptions of the two factions were entirely different. As Duncan Rice further argues:

To the conservative new organization, slavery was the most horrifying of a number of flaws in a polity that was fundamentally sound. They attacked it as the atrocity it was, and indeed they worked energetically against other social abuses. But their interest was in the fine tuning required to create a 'respectable' society based on the values of the evangelical elite. They had no intention of restructuring political and religious institutions. To most of the Garrisonians, party work was unacceptable, for they had moved to the radical position that slavery and other social imbalances were much more than correctable aberrations. They were evidence that a corrupt society should be rebuilt *de novo*, by separating from all

institutions that sanctioned force or ultimately relied on it. Many of the Garrisonians had become Christian anarchists whose views clearly threatened the traditional-minded businessmen and ministers who had hitherto dominated the movement and who were the leaders of the Tappanite group.<sup>4</sup>

The British did not always understand the complexity of these issues. Aside from the issue concerning the role of women, the issue of political participation was one they did understand because of their previous working of the political system to influence Westminster. As such, it would not be surprising that the Tappans found their strongest support in Britain from the national society in London, while Garrison's old organization party would find its strongest support coming from the provinces, especially Scotland and Ireland, where middle-class reformers were less directly involved in the national political process.<sup>5</sup>

The Garrisonian faction of the American movement sent many women delegates to the London convention. When the convention began on June 12, 1840, their presence quickly forced the convention to address the issue of the role of women. There was a sharp exchange between Stuart and George Thompson concerning the issue of who had actually been invited to be delegates, with the Broad Street committee claiming it never intended its invitation to delegates to include women. Stuart claimed that he was happy to let the convention adjudicate the dispute between the Broad Street committee and "our friends from Massachusetts and Pennsylvania" over whether or not women were included in the original invitation. But he argued that he was convinced from his first hand knowledge of abolitionists in those two states:

...that some of the noblest and most uncompromising friends of liberty and of the slave there, were against the reception of lady

delegates, and in favour of the British view. I am satisfied that there is a vast amount of that feeling.

Thompson quickly challenged Stuart's claim. While he spoke at length in favor of the position taken by the Garrisonian faction of the antislavery movement, he ultimately urged a withdrawal of the motion to seat women, and he asked women delegates to cooperate in order to "promote the peace of the convention."<sup>6</sup> The women, some of whom had traveled 3,000 miles to attend the convention, were not seated as delegates and were confined to a railed gallery, set aside for their convenience. Garrison had not been present when the debate over women took place, and when he arrived, he took his place, sitting with the women in the gallery.

While the convention got off to a rocky start, it would be wrong to see this issue as the dominant issue of the convention. Following the initial disagreement and over the remaining nine days of the convention, most of the enthusiastic delegates threw themselves into discussion and debate of far more than the American divisions.

One important issue for Stuart, which had always been seen as extreme by others, was the boycotting of slave-grown produce. His personal decision not to use any slave products, in either food or clothing, had been widely known and tolerantly and affectionately regarded by other abolitionists. Only a small number of British and Irish abolitionists followed suit. But, throughout his career as an abolitionist, his strict principle had not been shared by any other leading American abolitionists. By 1840, however, there was at last some growing interest in the notion of a broad economic boycott, if not in the rigorous personal regimen

followed by Stuart. In British circles, there had been an increasing advocacy of East Indian sugar, which had been promoted since the early 1820s as a preferable alternative to the slave-grown commodity. Now that British West Indian sugar was a product of free labor, other abolitionists joined Stuart in hoping for the survival of the plantation system for the same reasons, as well as to vindicate the old predictions about the superiority of free labor. At the same time, American delegates reacted enthusiastically to a new campaign, launched under the auspices of the British India Society by George Thompson and others, to promote Indian cotton as an alternative to the slave-grown staple of the American South.<sup>7</sup>

These wider developments meant that a livelier interest in the issue was aroused than otherwise might have been expected some years before, when Stuart, on the eighth day of the convention, moved the resolution that "this association earnestly recommends to the friends of humanity and religion, everywhere, to disuse slave-labour produce, as far as practicable."<sup>8</sup> The disagreement was widespread, and the debate contentious. In presenting his motion, Stuart had used what were for him the standard arguments in favor of boycotting. Ironically, what seemed to cause the most clamor from the delegates was his insertion of the phrase that these measures were to be followed as far as they were practical. In this, Stuart was persuaded that "duty in this matter required only what was practicable without sacrificing either life or health." He may have expected this qualification to appease those who had regarded his own practice extreme. The result, however, was that it made the resolution more controversial. From one side, he was assailed by those who thought the phrase weakened the resolution to

the point of blandness, and from the other side he met the expected criticism that such a boycott would be impracticable.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of widespread criticism, all of Stuart's critics expressed their admiration for him. Nathaniel Clover said, "I know the purity of Captain Stuart's views.... I love the purity of his mind, but in this resolution there is no standard." Richard Allen, the Dublin Quaker, said, "No one has a higher opinion of Captain Stuart's anti-slavery principles than I have; but I think the words, 'as far as practicable,' savour too much compromise." A Reverend J.T. Price said that the resolution "could not be brought forward by a more consistent man than Captain Stuart."<sup>10</sup> Anyone who knew Stuart, knew of his avoidance of cotton and sugar. What they questioned was their own ability to be as consistent as he had been.

In the face of these obvious differences of opinion, some delegates asked Stuart to withdraw his motion, while others were in favor of amending it. Interestingly, George Thompson reported recent communications he had from the Free Produce Association of Philadelphia as evidence of the great American interest in the question. He further argued that, if the resolution could not be passed as it stood, it should be modified at least to declare abstention, "a principle worthy of being observed." The Reverend J. Kennedy suggested an amended resolution calling on the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to provide lists of products of slave and free labor. Stuart rejected these criticisms and suggestions with his customary bluntness by stating:

I should like to speak against all the amendments. I have not for several years past used any article of slave-grown produce, and I have never found any difficulty in it. On all occasions, from my youth upwards, I have had reason to bless God that my conscience has been my own and not another's. I see that you are not prepared



for the discussion of this question; but I cannot withdraw the resolution. I therefore leave it in your hands, to do with it as you please.<sup>11</sup>

At this point, the Kennedy amendment was put forth, and the amended motion was carried by a large majority.

It would be misleading to argue that Charles Stuart was either a dominant figure or the focus of major controversy at the 1840 world convention. As the debate over the abstinence of slave produce had shown, his individuality and sincerity were widely respected. His prestige was indicated by the way engravings, taken from a portrait of him and owned by William Blair, were advertised for sale in the issue of the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* to coincide with the convention. The advertisement said, "We feel sure many of our friends will be glad to avail themselves of the opportunity of possessing a portrait of so zealous and indefatigable an advocate of the rights of the oppressed."<sup>12</sup>

It was also during this period that some influential members of the antislavery elite succeeded in having his pension raised to that of major, in recognition of his services to the antislavery cause. Although he would remain known as "Captain Stuart" to virtually all, this was effectively a promotion. This seems remarkable, given the questionable circumstances with which his military service had ended.<sup>13</sup>

At the London convention, Stuart also had an opportunity to speak about the conditions he had observed during his recent visit to the West Indies and was appointed to a committee to prepare a report on the post-apprenticeship situation. Despite all of his hard work and the recognition he received from others in

attendance, Stuart was not in the convention limelight as much as were Thompson, Stanton, and Birney.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see the convention as a watershed in Stuart's career...the period when he virtually personified the main characteristics of abolitionism, which had come to an end. Although few abolitionists had been more truly international in outlook and activity than had Stuart, his abolitionism had always exclusively focused on Negro slavery, despite his concerns for the plight of other non-European people such as American Indians. This convention revealed, however, that many of his former friends and associates were looking at other forms of oppression, particularly in British India. His uncompromising immediatism had made him appear radical in many ways, but his determination to achieve his ends through existing political systems was the hallmark of a reformer with basically conservative social and political attitudes. Already that conservatism was evidenced in his opposition to the women question and the anti-government position of the Garrisonians.

The future would reveal Stuart writing very critically of the government. While some might be tempted to place Stuart in the same anti-government category as Garrison, the two actually had different positions. While Garrison's anti-government policy was a strange withdrawal from anything political, Stuart was "anti-government" in terms of his frustration over the lack of action by the government.

Although the controversies that threatened to derail the convention at its outset had been quickly stilled, the foundations of future British conflict over the American split were laid during those first two weeks in June. They would be

consolidated in the following months as American delegates from both sides of the split visited antislavery societies throughout many parts of the country. There can be little doubt that Stuart voiced privately his opposition to the Garrisonian faction of the antislavery movement. But his main topic of discussion in those days following the convention was not the women question, but his recent visit to the West Indies. What put some of the convention's more controversial issues back on the front burner in British antislavery circles was a controversial visit to the British Isles by John A. Collins between October of 1840 and July of 1841. This dispute would enable Stuart to move back, even briefly, to the center of British antislavery politics, but in a way that would reveal again his fundamental belief that, with free labor, a degree of free speech, and opportunities for a decent life, British society was essentially sound.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> C. Duncan Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists, 1833-1861*, 1981, p. 81.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- <sup>3</sup> James G. Birney to Lewis Tappan, August 23, 1837, in Dumond, ed. *Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 1831-1857*, 2. vols., 1938, I, p. 418.
- <sup>4</sup> Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists*, p. 84.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- <sup>6</sup> *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, 1840*, pp. 32-35.
- <sup>7</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp. 101-102.
- <sup>8</sup> *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, 1840*, p. 437.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 437-447.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, I, 1840, p. 144.
- <sup>13</sup> Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Weld-Grimké Letters*, II, p. 710, n. 3.

## CHAPTER 10

### CAPTAIN CHARLES STUART VERSUS JOHN A. COLLINS

John Anderson Collins, the general agent of the Garrisonian Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, crossed the Atlantic to seek British financial support for the American Anti-Slavery Society and in particular for its newspaper, the *National Standard*, which was intended to counter the *Emancipator*, now under the control of the opposition American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. According to letters to Elizabeth Pease from Garrison and others in Boston, only extreme financial hardship had persuaded the Old Organizationists to make this plea for British assistance. But they were also well aware that the visit was likely to polarize British antislavery opinion. "I have told my friend Collins," wrote Garrison, "of the difficulties that will lie in his path, especially in consequence of the introduction of the new organized among you in England." The appeal was going out, wrote Boston Quaker William Bassett, to the "true friends of freedom in Britain [who were] misrepresented by the committee of [the] British and foreign A.S. Society."<sup>1</sup>

Upon his arrival in England, John Collins was careful to avoid immediate contact with Broad Street. In London he consulted with some members of the British India Society, loyal to Garrison, and then headed north to visit with Elizabeth Pease in Darlington and George Thompson in Edinburgh. On October

24, Charles Stuart wrote from Liverpool to Birney, Scoble, and Stanton in Dublin, informing them he was on his way to Edinburgh. While the letter mentions no details, it marks the escalation of the conflicts begun at the convention and exacerbated by Collins' visit.<sup>2</sup>

Stuart and Collins reached Edinburgh almost simultaneously in late October of 1840, the same time Scoble, Stanton, and Birney arrived in the Garrisonian stronghold of Dublin. Stuart and Collins would soon become locked in opposition as fierce and unrelenting as Stuart's confrontation with Elliot Cresson had been some years earlier. Stuart and Collins could not have been more opposed. After a few weeks in Britain, Collins was appalled by the harshness of the British class system to which Stuart remained utterly indifferent. While Stuart launched the attack against Collins, he was never taken seriously by Collins. Collins quickly developed a deep contempt for almost all British abolitionists and was indifferent himself to the consternation his presence was causing. He was convinced that his skirmishes with Stuart were winning support for the Old Organization. He acknowledged in a lengthy letter to Chapman, however, that he was aware that George Thompson was left somewhat demoralized by encountering opposition in his adoptive city of Edinburgh, where his influence prior to this had been almost beyond reproach. Collins also complained about his encounter with Stuart at an Edinburgh antislavery meeting. After a heated written exchange between the two over the format of the meeting, Collins was prepared to address the Edinburgh meeting. Following Collins' speech, questions quickly arose about his associations with Garrison, making it apparent that Stuart had arrived first. When Thompson assembled a meeting of

the men's committee, again, Stuart had addressed the group prior to his visit.

Collins, in complaining about the technique, questioned:

...when & where they had received the information, Thompson discovered the trick. He then succeeded in getting a committee meeting of the men's society called, to have me give the other side of the story, but a day previous to the meeting, who should present himself, but that ignorant tool of Joseph Sturge, Chas. Stuart, who is travelling the kingdom, ostensibly to wake up women, but really to sift in New Organization & get the societies to become auxiliary to the B & F Society. Stuart remarked that he made it his duty to enlighten the people, the first thing, on the subject of new and old organization. I think him the greatest ignoramus, on this matter, I ever met with. He knows just as much about the Am.[erican] controversy, as it knows about him.<sup>3</sup>

For this reason, Collins concluded that Thompson was not the man to lead their cause "through the assaults of its enemies & the treachery of its friends."<sup>4</sup> Collins, on the other hand, had no such doubts about his own abilities. Depicting his jousts with Stuart as easy victories over a ludicrous opponent, he left Edinburgh convinced that he had won considerable support. His further contacts with Elizabeth Pease, however, left him under no illusions that he would be well received when, in early December, he wrote to the Broad Street committee, presenting his credentials and formally requesting financial assistance and official endorsement of his mission. As he explained to Garrison soon afterward, this was merely a tactic "to make them show their colours." They had already done "infinite evil to our cause" while pretending to be neutral in the American dispute. But, although he expected his requests to be rejected, he hoped he might succeed in dividing the committee. He expected to follow his initial rebuff with a demand for a personal hearing, where he was sure he would win sympathy, most likely from Quaker committee members.<sup>5</sup> The opposition to Collins was stronger than

he had expected. On January 2, 1841, Collins wrote to Henry Grafton Chapman relating the difficulties he was encountering.

I had expected, till this morning to have remitted three hundred pounds to you, by the steamer, which sails from Liverpool the 4th inst., but I find no letters or bill as we had previously suggested. I regret this very much, as I am confident you must be suffering greatly. I do not know as I can promise another farthing. I would as soon go among the Southern slaveholders to solicit aid, as among the abolitionists of Great Britain. So much has been done, by Prest. Birney, Stanton, & Van Buren John Scoble, as they, in the capacity of philanthropic gentlemen, travelled all over the kingdom, to prejudice the mind of the leading abolitionists of the country, that we are shunned by them as we should have been by the rankest pro slav[er]y men of our country.... So strong is the anti-slay current against us, that but few, when they are convinced, have moral courage sufficient to face the opposition.<sup>6</sup>

In his letter to Henry Chapman, Collins enclosed an extract of a letter sent to the Broad Street Committee by Reverend Nathaniel Clover on November 30, 1839, warning them of Collins' mission. The letter argued that:

Garrison's influence is on the wane...he so identifies himself with every infidel fanaticism, which floats, as to have lost his hold on the good. He has recently headed a convention to inveigh against the Sabbath, the Church, & the ministry. It was affecting to see what a company he had identified himself with...the mildest of the no-marriage perfectionists.... Transcendentalists & Cape Cod...all the harmonious effort against the Bible as our Standard of faith, and especially, in denouncing the ministry &c[hurch] I think the a.s. cause will ultimately shake itself from that which has been a source of great reproach, & embarrassment...it has really been the cause of great trouble. J.A. Collins, has left for England, under suspicious circumstances. What are his objects we know not, but we fear to practice some imposition upon British sympathy for our cause. I hope you will beware of him...he is not entitled to your confidence.<sup>7</sup>

Collins' requests for financial aid from the Broad Street committee were predictably rejected. While Clover's allegations tended to damage Collins' reputation and motives among the Broad Street committee, similar allegations



about Garrison from Amos Phelps also further divided the two factions within the antislavery community.<sup>8</sup> As this controversy developed, the scattered pro-Garrison forces found themselves unorganized and outnumbered. By early 1841, the British Garrisonians were a beleaguered minority.

To some extent, Collins' difficulties were of his own making. He had an undiplomatic manner, which offended many, even of his own supporters. In addition, he deeply underestimated the resources and previous experience of the Broad Street committee, including those of Charles Stuart. And if Collins gave even the slightest signs in public of the contempt for Britain as he expressed in his letters to Garrison and others, he could only have made enemies. Although his arrogance made him inclined to dismiss all opposition as treachery, he was partly correct in not seeing Charles Stuart as his most important enemy. Rather it was John Scoble, who was consistently viewed by British Garrisonians as the evil genius mobilizing the resources and prestige of Broad Street in support of the New Organization. In early November, Richard Webb, the Irish abolitionist, was warning of Scoble's activities. In a letter to Elizabeth Pease, he wrote:

His unsleeping hostility, his watchful malignity against the old organizationists in general & Garrison in particular are odious beyond measure.... The impression he left after him was that of a self-willed, tyrannically minded, narrow souled, clever bigot.<sup>9</sup>

Commenting on Collins' prospects once he reached Britain, Webb continued, "I fear that Scoble has poisoned the way for them in wealthy England & and that [he] would meet a cold reception from most of the known friends of the antislavery cause in your country."<sup>10</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that Stuart was the prime intermediary between Nathaniel Clover and Amos Phelps,

and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Both Scoble and Sturge were extremely active during this period of agitation. For his part, Stuart would not meet Collins again after their debates in Edinburgh shortly after Collins' arrival. Stuart did, however, play an important role in the campaign against Collins. Collins' failure to understand that role is a further sign of his limitations, not the least of which was his inability to understand that he was being opposed by more than simply an under-handed conspiracy orchestrated by Broad Street.

From the time of their first and only encounter in Edinburgh, Collins had nothing but disdain for Stuart, as his letters have revealed. That Collins would make such disparaging remarks about Stuart demonstrates the American's own ignorance in terms of Stuart's significance. Perhaps, had he been more familiar with Stuart's numerous American connections and his vast American experiences, he would have been less likely to ridicule him as he did. Collins was only thirty years old at the time and seemed to know little or nothing of the anti-colonization campaigns that had made Stuart a hero of early American immediatists, for he ridiculed Stuart's claims in an earlier argument that others, such as Beriah Green and Gerrit Smith, "had done as much as Garrison to put down Colonization, insinuating at the same time a compliment to Chas. Stuart."<sup>11</sup>

Prior to their meeting in Edinburgh, Collins wrote to Stuart suggesting ground rules for their discussion of the American divisions. In his subsequent description of that debate before the Edinburgh committee, Collins again tried hard to disparage and distort Stuart's role. Collins suggested that they should each speak alternately for fifteen or twenty minutes, while Stuart preferred to let Collins give his entire speech and then for him to answer it. Collins saw this as

giving Stuart the "entire field." In fact, although Stuart had written to him that he would prefer for Collins to go first, he wrote:

If however you would prefer it, I am quite willing to proceed at once with my reply, together with such other matters as may occur to me, and then, when I have done, to leave you to proceed, without interruption. But I should prefer the former.<sup>12</sup>

More importantly misleading than his distorted version of the preliminaries was Collins' own confidence about the course and outcome of the debate. The committee had refused to accept Collins' suggestion that it should act as a quasi-judicial body and decide formally whether Stuart had proven his case against the American Anti-Slavery Society. Instead, it had given Stuart three-quarters of an hour to make his speech:

...whereupon he pulled from his bosom a small book, from which he read for about 35 minutes, a most indifferent & prosy essay, reiterating the same things previously stated, such as that the Am. Socty. was a women's rights intrusion society, that Garrison was an apostate...[and] entertained sentiments which his soul abhorred & &c.<sup>13</sup>

Although the committee had been strongly pro-Stuart, "being entirely composed of evangelicals," after this performance, claimed Collins:

I found a change. Invitations began to flock in, to breakfast here, dine there & sup somewhere else, and I was resolved not to leave the place until I had broken down that prejudice & to a considerable extent I flatter myself a good state of feeling was produced.... Stuart left the place greatly disheartened, but took his influence along with him as a goodly number of those who gave him at first a most cordial greeting, became my warmest friends.<sup>14</sup>

For all of his self-congratulating and belittling of Stuart's performance, his letters reveal his growing frustration over the effectiveness of his opponents. By introducing the American issues in Edinburgh, Collins had caused dissension in the ranks of the city's abolitionists. Elizabeth Pease wrote to Collins in mid-

November, commenting on his encounter in Edinburgh. While she sympathized with his plight, she made it clear that he had taken on a worthy adversary. She wrote, "We are almost hourly expecting to see Stuart marching in. A letter has arrived at my brother's from him."<sup>15</sup> Some ten days later, Pease reported to Collins the outcome of Stuart's visit to Darlington. He had spent only part of the day with the Pease family, quickly realizing that Elizabeth's opposition made it pointless to meet with the local Ladies Committee. She had bluntly told him of her disappointment at his opposition and complained particularly about his "meanness" in writing an anti-Garrison letter recently published in the *Irish Friend*. She reported to Collins that, "He was equally honest with me...and we parted excellent friends...agreeing, cordially to differ."<sup>16</sup>

In subsequent letters to Collins in December, she was less cordially indignant about Stuart, "who ought to know better." She was scathing in her denunciation, seeing him as "a pigmy gazing upon an eminence he cannot reach," in relation to Garrison, further arguing, "We must be merciful upon the poor man. I believe he has persuaded himself that he is doing a real service to mankind!!" Although her comments may have reinforced Collins' contempt for Stuart as an "ignoramus," Pease made it clear that Stuart was a relentless and influential opponent. Despite her Quaker connections, she conceded to Collins that she was not certain she could persuade the editor of the *Irish Friend* to include a counter to Stuart's anti-Garrison statements."<sup>17</sup>

Before the end of 1840, Collins had further evidence of Stuart's mobility and determination. He received a letter from John Murray, joint secretary with William Smeal of the Glasgow Emancipation Society, commenting on the

obstructions he had encountered. While Murray was visiting Smeal's home, he was shown "a specimen of the wrath of Capt. Stuart against your projects."<sup>18</sup> Collins was beginning to understand the strong force he was up against. Soon, Collins wrote to Garrison, expressing his discovery of a "crafty and subtle plan for taking revenge upon yourself" by Broad Street. As he saw it, their plan involved getting:

Birney, Stanton & Stuart to travel the country ostensibly to create an anti-slavery feeling, but really to sow discord & retail falsehood & calumny. Whenever I have fallen in their wake I find the people possessing the most distorted views respecting yourself and the genuine Am. abolition. They appear to feel that Weld organization, of the Garrison school, is the climax of absurdities. That you are a Unitarian, which is sufficient reason for casting both yourself and old organization beyond the pale of union or sympathy. They really believe, & consider their position indisputable, that the Am.As.S. Society is but another name for a Women's rights & no human government Society, & that it was from the continual thrusting in of these extraneous topics that such noble! spirits as Stanton, Birney, Tappan et. al. were compelled for the sake of peace and the poor slave to, peaceably, withdraws and form another antislavery association.<sup>19</sup>

Collins was correct in his assessment of Broad Street's effect in neutralizing any support he wished to gain, but he was wrong in attributing to Sturge some master plan of revenge for Garrison's disruptive role at the London convention. And he was certainly wrong in seeing Charles Stuart as a "tool" of Joseph Sturge. The relationship between Stuart and Sturge can be better understood in light of a letter Stuart wrote to Weld in March of 1841. Sturge was about to visit the United States, and Stuart wrote to Weld, saying:

Joseph Sturge is about to pay the United States a visit; and I have promised him a true brother's heart and home, should he go to you. He is a holy and noble soul. As from you, I differ from him utterly on some points, but to the moral and religious grandeur and beauty which characterize him, I cannot be insensible.<sup>20</sup>

Because many of the leading abolitionists had numerous opportunities to meet and discuss current attitudes and tactics, there is no evidence suggesting any one person was responsible for organizing what Collins saw as a master "plan." It was no doubt a cooperative effort on the part of like-minded people within Broad Street that led to cooperative action. And in this, as had always been the case, Charles Stuart remained his own man. It would have been out of character for him to simply be a spokesperson for others. While over the past decade he had found emotional satisfaction in cooperative ventures, he had always found like-minded individuals or associations through which to press his own uncompromising views. And when no association could be found, he continued to follow his own course, as he had with the boycott issue. It was for this very reason that he was often seen, even by those with whom he was close, as individualistic, to the point of verging on eccentricity.

In the months ahead, Indian slavery, in particular, continued to be discussed by the Broad Street committee. And as events would later bear out, Stuart's opposition to its views remained intact. Any differences he may have had were submerged because he had once again found an American issue he could press in Britain. One assessment of the way in which Stuart's activities complemented rather than merely executed Broad Street's policies was provided by one of Collins' English supporters, Thomas Sturge. A cousin of Joseph Sturge, but from the outset a supporter of old organization, Thomas wrote to mutual American friends concerning Collins' difficulties, explaining:

I think he arrived in this country at what may be termed an unhappy period when many of the members of the British &

Foreign Anti-Slavery Society by being misinformed of the state of things in America, had committed themselves by uniting in the views of the American & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society not at the time being aware that they by so acting might obstruct the usefulness of women. I believe such persons to have been deceived. In this country there is no clear perception of the motives that induces the body in America to endeavour to put women down. There being only one Anti-Slavery Society viz. the British & Foreign, it was another untoward circumstance that J.A. Collins did not bring credentials numerously signed addressed to that Society, for had he done so no room would have been left for some of the members of the Anti-Slavery Society to have circulated the surmises & reports to his disadvantage which were sent from America.... The situation of JA Collins was a distressing one, in as much as being in poor health when he arrived, he met with a very unkind & uncalled for opposition from a violent man, a captain Stewart [sic.]. I do not however doubt that Captn Stewart is a most sincere & zealous abolitionist, capable of great pleasantness of manner & patience & persuasive power...but from some weakness capable of a degree of inveteracy more befitting those bereft of reason than a peaceable Christian. I have heard his conduct condemned but this did not prevent your friend Collins from being hurt by it.<sup>21</sup>

In the past, some had questioned Stuart regarding his eccentricity. Now, largely because of his single-mindedness and seemingly vindictive approach to Collins, some were beginning to question his emotional stability. While Stuart may have been used to gossip and character assassinations, he was distinctive for the openness of his hostility to Collins. At a time when the pro-Garrison British abolitionists were complaining of a secret sinister plot, Stuart had proclaimed his opposition in print. In January of 1841, he published a pamphlet that was widely circulated. The publication took the form of a heavily biased historical summary of the American antislavery trends, followed by a demand that Collins be rejected by British philanthropists. Stuart claimed that the American schism was the result of:



new opinions [which] began to be broached; and one of these gradually assumed the position, that 'whatever is morally right for a *man* to do is morally right for a *women* to do;' and, therefore, women ought to be intruded, as delegates, debaters, and managers, into mixed Societies of men and women.<sup>22</sup>

Stuart called this an "insane innovation" and went on to argue that to give that organization money would be to hurt the cause of abolition rather than to help it. American abolition was a cause worthy of support, but he encouraged those with money to spare to send it to Lewis Tappan in New York, rather than to those who "did their best to distract our meeting in June."<sup>23</sup>

By the time Collins arrived in Glasgow in February of 1841, the Glasgow Emancipation Society was embroiled in disputes over the American issues. And for a number of reasons, those issues were to assume a prominent place in the public life of the city. As Duncan Rice explains in detail, antislavery in Scotland had developed both more recently and more vigorously than in many other areas. In the later eighteenth century, Scottish philosophers had provided some of the strongest intellectual arguments against slavery without developing a comparably strong organization to attack an institution to which Glasgow had major economic connections. Some abolitionists had appeared in the early nineteenth century, but, even in 1833, the Scots had played no more than an ancillary role in the campaign that led to the British government outlawing slavery. That decision, however, freed them of their inhibitions. Glasgow no longer had an economic involvement in slavery. By focusing on American slavery, which was beyond the direct influence of the British government, the Scots embraced a cause that did not require them to acknowledge the privileged position of an antislavery society based in London. In addition to this regional pride, the links with George



Thompson pushed many abolitionists into a pro-Garrison position. Thompson had been a major force in Scottish abolitionism in 1833 and 1838. And it was under Scottish patronage that he visited the United States and consolidated his friendship with Garrison.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, these trends did not make Scottish support for the Old Organization monolithic. Rice argues that antislavery disagreements developed to an extraordinary level of vehemence because they were used as a means of furthering existing religious feuds. Scottish religious politics may have been unusually intense, because, in a nation without a government of its own, there were inadequate outlets for the energies and talents that might have found expression in a national parliament. With reasons existing to attack one's opponents on issues unrelated to their positions on slavery, the Scottish divisions helped complicate the deepening divisions within abolitionism. This does not mean that Scots were insecure in attacking American slavery. On the contrary, Scottish evangelicals, no less than their English counterparts, were convinced that slavery was the embodiment of sin. But their religious politics encouraged partisan views about the connections between religion and American slavery. The general context was a conflict between the established Church of Scotland and various voluntary denominations, such as the old Presbyterian Secession churches, the Congregationalists, and the Baptists, which were gaining strength, particularly in Glasgow. Because there was no established church in the United States, members of the established Scottish church could make capital out of the flourishing of slavery in a society dominated by voluntarism. It thus became urgent for Scottish voluntarists to combat American slavery to vindicate the

voluntarist principle. Even so, Scottish divisions over the American antislavery split were not simply a matter of established church against voluntary denominations. The Scottish denominations tended to have strong links with their American counterparts. With so many American clerical abolitionists supporting New Organization, such links in some cases may have helped influence Scottish decisions concerning taking sides. At the same time, the voluntary denominations, in their competition for ascendancy at home, were not adverse to making capital out of the links between rival denominations and American churches tainted by slaveholding connections.<sup>25</sup>

Despite these distinctive local influences, Scottish abolitionists were also typically British. As affluent members of the middle class, they were as likely as the English to feel threatened by more radical domestic political agitation. In the climax of Collins' visit, local manifestations of Chartism were to play a vital role. The same middle class conservatism was potentially, if more remotely, at odds with the radical implications of Garrisonianism. Individual decisions about the American issue could easily be influenced by personal responses to the implications of women's equality. Under such circumstances, the role of an American interpreter of the American scene could be very important. This was Stuart's contribution during this period.

The immediate cause of the contentious atmosphere that greeted Collins in Glasgow was an appendix to the Glasgow Emancipation Society's sixth annual report published in late 1840, in which the secretaries, Smeal and Murray, had effectively endorsed the Garrisonian position. This stand angered other committee members, led by the Reverend Ralph Wardlaw, who claimed that such

a commitment had not been discussed by the society and was an unauthorized reversal of the position its delegates had taken at the London convention, when they voted to exclude female delegates. This dispute spread beyond Glasgow in late January, when Joseph Sturge had asked for his name to be withdrawn from the Glasgow society's list of honorary corresponding members in protest against the offending appendix.<sup>26</sup>

When Collins met the Glasgow Emancipation Society's committee on February 11, two of his three most prominent opponents, Wardlaw and Reverend Dr. Hugh Heugh, stayed away. The third, the Reverend Dr. David King, was in the chair and questioned Collins closely about the American divisions. Although Collins presented the Garrisonian case "at some length," the committee decided to postpone consideration of his requests for "sympathy and pecuniary support" pending publication by his supporters of a pamphlet explaining the American divisions which he had written while in Darlington.<sup>27</sup>

In the eyes of Smeal and Murray, the hostility of the three clerics was not attributable primarily to Joseph Sturge, but was rather the work of Stuart.

At about this time it was discovered, that Captain Stuart had sent to Dr. Wardlaw a printed letter, containing charges against the Original American Anti-Slavery Society, and against Messrs COLLINS and REMOND, its representatives in this country; which letter found its way to Dr. Heugh and also to Dr. King, whilst no copy was sent by the Captain to the official organs of the Society, the Secretaries.... The Captain knew, that was not the quarter for his purpose.<sup>28</sup>

Because of the growing opposition to Garrisonianism, Smeal and Murray decided that the best response would be to invite Stuart to Glasgow to debate his charges with Collins before the committee and later at a public meeting. The only

remedy seemed to be a "full and free examination into the differences which separate our American friends." They saw Stuart as the obvious man to invite in order to represent New Organization against the Old Organization advocacy of Collins, arguing:

Charles Stuart...or Captain Stuart as he is often termed...has been the most assiduous in spreading information regarding the state of matters in the United States; and is, we believe, the best acquainted with the circumstances of any man in this country.<sup>29</sup>

The invitation to Stuart intensified the conflict in the Glasgow Emancipation Society, partly as a result of his contemptuous response. In a letter from Bath dated March 8, he rejected the invitation. He was not aware that his charges needed any defense. They were simply a matter of fact, which could be proved or disproved "quite irrespective of me." He was "not of opinion that truth becomes more true by mere repetition." Nonetheless, he did "most unequivocally, solemnly, and fully, re-affirm their entire truthfulness." With a thrust reminiscent of his counterattacks against superior officers in India thirty years before, he continued:

I may add, my dear Smeal, with all candour and kindness, that if I am going to judge the Glasgow Emancipation Committee, by the sentiments and positions advanced by you and dear John Murray, on this subject, when I last met you in Glasgow, I should be insane in submitting myself to you as judges, knowing the total and deplorable derangement of your views, in this matter, both as to facts and principles.<sup>30</sup>

He went on to dismiss Collins with the same contempt the Americans had displayed toward him. He had offered months before in Edinburgh to debate the issue with Collins around the kingdom. Since that time, however, he had satisfied himself that he had:

at that time greatly over-rated his power of mischief in the Abolition cause amongst us, so that I do not feel at all warranted at present, in duty, to turn any portion of my time and means from the direct service of God and my fellow-men, to the indulgence of irrelevant, captious, and pernicious questions.<sup>31</sup>

Stuart concluded that he shortly would "make a trip of a few months to America." Upon his return, he would explore the question further and would most likely "make a pretty extensive Anti-Slavery tour" to report his findings. This reply left Smeal and Murray with no choice but to cancel the proposed Collins-Stuart debate. Their invitation to Stuart, however, had precipitated another crisis. Stuart's allies on the Glasgow Emancipation Society committee responded as indignantly as he had to the joint secretaries' plan for a debate. Wardlaw promptly resigned from the society. Heugh told Smeal and Murray that a debate would "bring upon us the merited derision of the public in Glasgow." He remained in the society for two more committee meetings and then resigned on March 16. These resignations and the turmoil they caused cannot be entirely attributed to Stuart's influence. In both cases, the overt issue was the commitment to Old Organization and women's rights, allegedly made in the appendix to the sixth annual report of the society. But Stuart's printed letter can only have powerfully reinforced the misgivings that both Wardlaw and Heugh already felt on this question. Stuart's circular, which had prompted the committee to nominate him as the most suitable British advocate for New Organization, had attributed the American schism exclusively to the women question. It had been argued that those who supported Collins would be demonstrating that they "value the intrusion of women into the debate and management of mixed Societies more highly than the cause of liberty and love." This allegation can only have hardened

the resolve of Heugh and Wardlaw against committing the Glasgow society to Old Organization, for both had equally conservative views about the role of women. Wardlaw, in his letter of resignation, argued that such a commitment placed "Women's misnamed rights in opposition to Women's appropriate character." And Heugh was no less confident that he knew what "British Ladies" needed and desired. "They would thank no man to advocate imaginary rights, from the exercise of which, were they conceded, they would shrink with becoming sensitiveness."<sup>32</sup>

Collins spent nine weeks in Glasgow. Amid a flurry of private lobbying and attending committee meetings, and eventually public meetings attended by thousands, the fortunes of the two contending factions continued to fluctuate. The resignations of Wardlaw and Heugh seemed to leave the committee leaning to the pro-Garrison side, but the more conservative, largely clerical opposition, led by King, was regularly able to muster sufficient support to frustrate open commitment of the society to Collins' mission. In early March, the secretaries sent to the membership their own circular on the American split entitled, *Right and Wrong Among the Abolitionists of the United States*, and asked for financial support for Collins. This prompted opposition within the committee, and Smeal and Murray were forced to send a second circular in which they accepted responsibility as individuals and were not claiming any official commitment by the society. At a committee meeting on March 29, a pro-Collins circular was approved but overturned at the next meeting on April 13. A series of resolutions was passed, declaring the neutrality of the Glasgow Emancipation Society in the American dispute. They further refused to endorse any publication or agent of

either American society, until they had ample time to investigate their differences.<sup>33</sup>

By now, Collins was growing pessimistic about his prospects in Glasgow. In a letter to Richard Webb, Collins indicated that the March 29 decision had been produced by the regular committee, which was strongly in favor of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The subsequent reversal had been achieved when the clergy had packed the April 13 meeting with nominal but usually inactive members of the committee. His conviction that the committee had been "sacrificed to New Organization" was unshaken by a public meeting attended by 2,500 people. The meeting lasted six hours, and while there had been considerable evidence of support for his position, nothing had been settled. Although there was to be another meeting, he was dispirited because the first one had been disrupted by a Chartist demonstration, which sought to shift the attention from slavery to domestic reform, and then had been reported in a biased fashion by a conservative press. Although though he wrote despondently to Webb of the difficulties of contending with "a great body of Chartists on the one hand and a large body of the tools of clergymen on the other hand," there was no question which of the extremes Collins preferred.<sup>34</sup>

For Scottish evangelical reformers, it may have been a major departure to seek alliance with the Chartists. For Collins, it was not only a necessary tactic but a logical development of the radical distaste he had already expressed for the iniquities of the British class system. On April 27, a public meeting of 4,000 to 5,000 people included an unusually large working class component. By accepting pro-Chartist resolutions, the antislavery organizers were at last able to resolve



their own issue in Collins' favor. Resolutions were passed condemning the Committee's treatment of the American, expressing no confidence in the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and pledging "sympathy and support" to the "original American Anti-Slavery Society." By resolving to add seventeen new members to the committee of the Glasgow Emancipation Society, the meeting virtually ensured that its pro-Garrison position would be permanent. The reaction of Collins could be seen by some as smugly arrogant, as, in his letter to Garrison, he states:

By plotting and packaging on the part of the clergy & [sleepy?] & most foolish credulity on the part of my friends, the Glasgow Em. Com. became new organized. I then told them that I would leave unless they would put themselves under my direction and do according to my commandments, which if they would, I would again restore the com. to them. They agreed to do it.... They have got the society back into their own hands, where they do not again foolishly mean to lose it.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of Collins' glee, it was something of a hollow victory. His lengthy stay in Glasgow had prevented him from extensive campaigning and fundraising elsewhere, before returning to the United States in mid-1841. Charles Stuart's condescending conclusions about Collins' limited "power of mischief" had been largely vindicated, despite the eventual Old Organization victory in Glasgow.



### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Garrison to Pease, September 30, 1840; Bassett to Pease, September 23, 1840, in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, pp. 115-116.
- <sup>2</sup> Collins to Maria Weston Chapman, December 3, 1840, *ibid.*, pp. 126-128; Thompson to R.D. Webb, November 2, 1840, *ibid.*, p. 118; Stuart to Birney, October 24, 1840, Weld Papers.
- <sup>3</sup> Collins to Chapman, December 3, 1840, Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, pp. 126-131.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Collins to Garrison, December 27, 1840, *ibid.*, p. 132, 135.
- <sup>6</sup> Collins to Henry Grafton Chapman, January 2, 1841, *ibid.*, pp. 138-139.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> Garrison to Elizabeth Pease, June 1, 1841; *ibid.*, p. 153.
- <sup>9</sup> Webb to Pease, November 4, 1841; *ibid.*, p. 120.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> Collins to M.W. Chapman, December 3, 1840; *ibid.*, pp. 128-130.
- <sup>12</sup> Collins to M.W. Chapman, December 30, 1840, *ibid.*, p. 130; Collins to Stuart, November 6, 1840, *ibid.*, p. 121; Stuart to Collins, November 7, 1840, *ibid.*, p. 121.
- <sup>13</sup> Collins to M.W. Chapman, December 3, 1840; *ibid.*, p. 130.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> E. Pease to Collins, November 16, 1840, Boston Public Library.
- <sup>16</sup> E. Pease to Collins, November 28, 1840, Boston Public Library.
- <sup>17</sup> E. Pease to Collins, December 6, 17, 1840, Boston Public Library.
- <sup>18</sup> Murray to Collins, December 23, 1840, Boston Public Library.
- <sup>19</sup> Collins to Garrison, December 27, 1840, Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 134.
- <sup>20</sup> Stuart to Weld, March 1, 1841, Weld Papers.
- <sup>21</sup> T. Sturge to the Henry G. and Maria Weston Chapman, April 5, 1841, Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 146.
- <sup>22</sup> The pamphlet by Stuart is reprinted verbatim in Barns and Dumond, eds., *Weld-Grimké Letters*, II, pp. 858-860.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 860.

<sup>24</sup> Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists, 1833-1861*, pp. 19-29.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-58, 197-198.

<sup>26</sup> *Resolutions of Public Meetings of the Members and Friends of the Glasgow Emancipation Society; Correspondence of the Secretaries; and Minutes of the Committee of Said Society, Since the Arrival in Glasgow, of Mr. John A. Collins, the Representative of the American Abolitionists.* 1841, pp. 5-7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>30</sup> Reprinted in *Resolutions of the Glasgow Emancipation Society*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 12-13, 18-23.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-36.

<sup>34</sup> Collins to Webb, April 25, 1841, Boston Public Library.

<sup>35</sup> *Resolutions of the Glasgow Emancipation Society*, pp. 3-5; Collins to Garrison, May 2, 1841, Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 150; Webb to Garrison, May 30, 1841, *ibid.*, p. 152; Rice, *Scots Abolitionists*, pp. 108-113.

## CHAPTER 11

### UNDERSTANDING CHARLES STUART'S SENSE OF BETRAYAL

Charles Stuart's opposition to the Old Organization in 1841 was not limited to attacking the mission of John Collins. He pursued his vendetta against the Garrisonians with a thoroughness that puzzled and sorrowed many who had been his friends. For some, the eccentricity he had always displayed now seemed the only explanation for a cruel betrayal. In his only detailed explanation of his attitudes, Stuart argued that he was simply being more consistent than his opponents. While this argument may have been intellectually honest, it remained incomplete. To a certain extent, Stuart himself did not understand that his opponents were correct in drawing attention to his emotional intensity, which now made him a major opponent of Garrison.

Stuart's earlier claim, in March of 1841, that he had more important things to do than go to Glasgow and debate Collins, may have sounded like an evasive and empty excuse. To characterize it completely in such a way would be unfair. Exactly one week prior to writing to the Glasgow committee, Stuart wrote to Weld of his impending return to the United States. As he had always done, he exuded intense commitment to both their friendship and the antislavery cause. In addition, the letter reveals for the first time that differences in religious views between himself and Theodore Weld existed. He wrote, "Dear brother of my soul,

my Theodore, I have rec'd your united letter. Yes; we differ...widely as the Poles...but we differ, as of old, in love." Stuart conveyed his delight in hearing the news of the birth of a second son and added, "Dearest Theodore, I beg you, I require you, by our love, to call your younger boy, Theodore.... I want our names to go together. Were it possible indeed, I should call the elder Theodore, & the younger Charles." While he looked forward to a reunion with the Welds, he made it clear that the cause of abolition was the reason for his visit. During his visit, he was looking forward to attending the anniversary meeting of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. He enclosed a copy of his circular against Garrison that had caused a stir in Glasgow, saying:

The accompanying will shew [sic] you how I have felt constrained by the intrusive pertinacity of Mr. Collins in this country. He and his party have succeeded in alienating a few of our noblest minds, but the evil is very limited; and the cause of our down trodden brother proceeds with little interruption.<sup>1</sup>

In the long term, British sympathy for the Garrisonians came to be centered not only in Dublin and Glasgow but also in Bristol. There, Dr. J.B. Estlin, a Unitarian eye specialist, and his daughter, Mary, emerged in the late 1840s as strong supporters of Garrison and Old Organization, particularly after Garrison's visit in 1846. One of the reasons it took some time for other abolitionists in and around Bristol to become solidly committed to Old Organization, as the Estlins eventually made clear, was because of the influence Stuart had exerted, particularly on women abolitionists in 1841. A decade later, Mary Estlin wrote proudly to Anne Warren Weston in Boston about Fanny Tribe, a recent pro-Garrison convert, "I feel particularly proud of her as a pupil because she received her early anti-slavery lessons from Capt. Chas. Stuart & was long

under Scoble's tutorship."<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Tribe soon confirmed this as she wrote to Maria Weston Chapman regarding the prejudice against Garrison, which she encountered among other female abolitionists. She wrote, "I can fully sympathise with them, having myself had all the feelings and prejudices under which they labour: for I, like them, learnt much of my A.S. from Capt. Chas. Stuart and Mr. Scoble."<sup>3</sup>

At the same time Stuart was having an impact in the west country, he was also preparing another pamphlet for the press. Published on April 1, 1841, *Oneida and Oberlin* contained brief histories of those two antislavery educational institutions, as well as an account of the martyrdom of Elijah Lovejoy. The pamphlet was essentially a plea for British financial support for the "noble band of upright and impartial spirits" who were fighting for abolition amid "danger and contumely." He stressed that this noble band was:

...not they, who hold the intrusion, as delegates, debators, and governors, of women into mixed societies of men and women, so dear, that they trample upon all harmony in their effort to impose it upon others: not they, who affirm we own no allegiance to human governments: not they, who would destroy the christian sabbath, &c.: but they, who, rejecting all these destructive dogmas, confine themselves to their proper object; viz., the emancipation of the slave, on christian principles, in a lawful, peaceable, and christian manner.<sup>4</sup>

Stuart's visit to the United States proved to be short. He spent much time visiting his family in Canada. He did have a brief reunion with the Weld family, including one with Cornelia, which produced no recorded flickers of emotion or regret. On September 25, 1841, he was saying good-bye to Theodore in characteristic style. He hoped to return within two years, but, "If earlier called

home, do not unduly mourn that your poor, tottering, struggling friend, was the sooner called from battle to victory.... Then oh then our Meeting!!”<sup>5</sup>

As in the past, these by now almost ritual references to his physical deterioration were not to be taken seriously. In June, Lewis Tappan had commented on Stuart’s arrival in New York “in good health.” Tappan also reported that Stuart had brought with him “a pamphlet from John A. Collins, which I can not but look upon as a vile production...full of misrepresentations and calumny.”<sup>6</sup> During his brief stay, Stuart traveled extensively, visiting fugitive blacks, pursuing his antislavery interests, and attempting to gain information on the divisions in the antislavery associations in the United States. Sarah Grimké, who like her sister had remained neutral in the great American quarrel, eventually wrote to Elizabeth Pease that “Charles Stuart took much pains to ascertain the real cause of the dissension [sic] in our ranks.” But Pease was unlikely to be convinced by these words, for Stuart’s activities on his return to Britain had seemed to her a mere continuation of his previous campaign. The first she knew of his return was when her mother received a copy from him of a pamphlet put out by the anti-Garrisonian Massachusetts Abolition Society. “Poor fellow,” she wrote to Collins in October of 1841, “he seems resolved on not allowing the subject a rest.”<sup>7</sup>

As Stuart continued his anti-Garrison agitation, the May 1841 edition of the *Liberator* ran a headline, “*Et tu, Brute?*” as it reproduced in full Stuart’s pamphlet attacking Collins. The Shakespearean cliché hinted at the seriousness and the sorrow with which his hostility was viewed. However, in implying bewilderment at the treachery of an old friend, it was also representative of a

widespread misunderstanding of Stuart's position by both the American and British supporters of Old Organization.<sup>8</sup>

The *Liberator* initially sounded indifferent to Stuart's campaign, issuing a curt introduction:

The following is a circular from the pen of C. STUART of England, which he has widely distributed in that country. To the friends of primitive abolitionism in the United States its spirit and design will be obvious, and render all comments unnecessary.<sup>9</sup>

Garrison's sense of betrayal, however, was deeply felt. Garrison soon complained to Elizabeth Pease of the rumors that Stuart had recently circulated widely in England copies of *Knapp's Liberator*, a paper produced only once by Garrison's estranged former publishing partner, Isaac Knapp. Garrison complained that the circular was designed to prove "that I am no better than a swindler or knave!" "*Et tu, Brute!*" he repeated to Pease.

Is it possible that my old friend Stuart can be guilty of this mean and wicked conduct? Have I indeed fallen so low in his estimation, that he regards me as a villain in practice, as well as a heathen in speculation?<sup>10</sup>

Stuart's attack was resented, not just because he was once a man Garrison considered among his ardent friends, but because he had seemed one of the few British abolitionists in tune with the American antislavery temperament. The two men had drifted apart since the early days when the *Liberator* exultantly reproduced Stuart's anti-colonization tracts. But as recently as October of 1840, the paper had recalled Stuart's distinctive qualities. In a contemptuous editorial on the London convention, it had referred to British abolitionism as "cowardly, heartless, and corrupt" and characterized the British movement as an upper-class affectation. Its exponents liked to "bask in the sunshine of royalty, and to be

applauded to the echo in Exeter Hall, with a royal duke in the chair.” But, “as soon as any portion of it is imported into this country,” it shunned American abolitionists and stood aloof from all contact with black Americans. Only Stuart, George Thompson and Harriet Martineau had remained “faithful and true” in America.<sup>11</sup>

Two weeks after declaring that any comment of Stuart’s pamphlet was “unnecessary,” the *Liberator* reproduced extensive extracts from the appendix to Collins’ pamphlet, *Right and Wrong*, about Stuart’s “defamatory printed circular” and about their direct confrontation in Edinburgh the previous November.<sup>12</sup> Also reproduced was a comment on Stuart’s circular from Charles Remond, a delegate of the American Anti-Slavery Society to the London convention and a Garrison loyalist. Of Stuart’s condemnation of the Garrisonians, Remond wrote:

What was great, and good, and noble, and christian, and philanthropic, and anti-slavery in 1835, has become small, and evil, and mean, and infidel and slavish, and pro-slavery in 1841! Indeed may we not exclaim, ‘How the mighty have fallen!’<sup>13</sup>

One week later, the next edition of the *Liberator* carried a detailed account of the way Stuart’s circular had ruined Collins’ reception in Glasgow. From the time it was received, “certain members of the Committee began to exhibit hostile feelings towards the American Society, and coldness towards its representative.”<sup>14</sup> To several of his new opponents, there was a simple explanation for Stuart’s hostility, namely that he was mentally unbalanced. Garrison concluded his complaint to Elizabeth Pease about Stuart’s vendetta in Britain, saying, “For this and for other acts of unkindness, on his part, toward myself, I make all possible allowance on account of his peculiar temperament, and most cheerfully forgive



him.”<sup>15</sup> Far less forgiving was John Collins in his allegations about Stuart’s “turbulent, wild, and disorderly” conduct at the London convention when he wrote, “The epithet frantic is the only one that exactly defines the temper of his mind, in relation to old organized anti-slavery in the United States.”<sup>16</sup> And Thomas Sturge explained Collins’ predicament as stemming from almost schizoid behavior by Stuart:

...a most sincere & zealous abolitionist, capable of great pleasantness of manner & patience & persuasive power...but from some weakness capable of a degree of inveteracy more befitting those bereft of reason than a peaceable Christian.<sup>17</sup>

These explanations of Stuart appealed to many Garrisonians because Stuart’s earlier work made his hostility now seem like a betrayal. The “*Et tu, Brute*” theme was in other minds long before Garrison published it in May of 1841. The previous November, Elizabeth Pease, in a letter to Collins, had depicted Stuart as one of those Garrison associates “who seemed to have drunk so largely into his spirit.... Alas! how might the dear Garrison exclaim ‘twas not an Enemy that did it, else I could have borne it, but my familiar friend.’”<sup>18</sup>

As Stuart developed his polemics against the women-intruding Garrisonians, none of his opponents stressed that as an elderly bachelor he might be expected to conform to the orthodoxies of the period about the place of women in society. Failing to see that his previous advocacy of female abolitionism had always stressed separate roles, they chose to cite his anti-feminism as further evidence that he had changed.

Yet not all of Stuart’s opponents saw his hostility as the wild *volte-face* some perceived it to be. Both Richard Webb and John Murray recognized that

American trends had introduced new issues, and they believed that Stuart's background and training, rather than an irrational temperament, dictated his attitudes to them. Webb found Garrison's now crucial non-resistance and anticlerical views compatible with his own Quakerism. Indeed, he was "utterly amazed at the hostility" shown by his fellow Quaker, Joseph Sturge. Far less surprising to him was the position of Scoble, "who is a priest to the back bone," or Stuart, "who altho' a man of good impulses is a priest & a soldier too!"<sup>19</sup> Stuart's military background seemed to Murray to be the obvious reason for his "inveterate opposition" to Garrison. He put it to Stuart, that if Garrison's "views on the Peace question" became general, "they would overthrow all the paraphernalia of war and make it incumbent on him and all conscientious men who held anything like peace principles to abandon an income derived from such a source."<sup>20</sup>

Murray put this hypothesis forward when he wrote to Stuart, "asking him to state his objections to Garrison & the cause of the great change of mind regarding him." In reply, Stuart insisted that it was Garrison and not himself who had changed. "I judged of Mr. Garrison formerly, as he then appeared.... I judge of him now, as he now appears." Formerly he had seemed a:

...thorough and zealous friend of the slave.... He is now just as much of an Abolitionist, as other new dogmas which he has since brought out will permit: He is an abolitionist, when he can get others to adopt his women's-rights notions: but until then the rights as he conscientiously deems them of women, drown in his ear, the cry of the Slave.... He is an Abolitionist; but he does all that he can to discredit & destroy, one of the most dutiful and powerful means for the deliverance of the Slave i.e. faithfulness to duty at the Elections, thereby giving over the government completely, to the hands of the slave party.<sup>21</sup>

For Charles Stuart, there was a growing uneasiness in his perceived attempts by Garrison to shift the focus from the antislavery cause to other less important issues. Stuart recalled how he had been willing to subordinate his own belief in a boycott of slave produce for the good of antislavery unity. While Stuart had maintained his personal boycott, he believed that it would be inappropriate for the American Anti-Slavery Society to become an anti-slave-produce society as it would for temperance societies to pursue abolition. For Stuart, this was the fundamental principle the Garrisonians had violated.

It is most likely true, as Aileen Kraditor had argued, that before the American split had finally occurred, the Garrisonians had not in fact infringed this principle and had largely kept their other reform goals off the antislavery platform. But Stuart had entered this controversy late, when the split had released the Garrisonians from the need for self-denial in the interests of antislavery unity. Under such circumstances the changes Stuart perceived in Garrison may have stood out rather strikingly. However, there is every reason to suppose that, had Stuart remained in the United States through the period of growing dissension, he would have seen the tendencies of Garrisonian policies in the same hostile terms. The issues he defined as central, the women question and the question of political action, were much more than matters of tactical disagreement. There is no doubt that Stuart would have eventually opposed Garrison on these issues because they were related to fundamental questions about the nature of society and government.<sup>22</sup>

In the terminology applied particularly to this question by Aileen Kraditor, Stuart was a "reformer" to whom slavery was a blemish on a basically satisfactory

society. He might be well aware of other blemishes such as drunkenness, but he was horrified by the attitude of "radical" abolitionists that slavery was merely "the worst example of the nation's reliance on force rather than love," and that abolition was therefore only one measure toward a total reorganization of American society, which would eliminate inequalities between the sexes, economic competition, and ultimately the system of government itself. Without doubt, many British supporters of Garrison were far less radical than this. Murray believed, after reading Stuart's letter, that the only "tangible and tenable" objection he had to Garrison was the women's rights question. But Murray wrote to Collins that abolitionists had "nothing to do with this question," except when it was directly connected to the participation of women "in abolition societies and committees in equality with men." Collins may have smiled at the naiveté of this view. He, Garrison, and others were certainly by now committed to a wider view of women's rights. Yet even so, Murray evidently failed to perceive that his own simple desire, that women should be allowed to join antislavery societies, raised in Stuart's mind the wider question of women's rights. As his anti-Collins circular had stressed, the crux of his opposition was that the intrusion of women "as delegates, debaters, and managers, into mixed societies of men and women," was an assertion of the principle that "whatever is morally right for a *man* to do is morally right for a *woman* to do." To Stuart, this principle was unacceptably disruptive to the ordering of society. It placed the:

...abolition effort at war with the most sacred and fundamental of human relations, even with those relations by which God had given to men and women their respective spheres, and by sacredly regarding which alone, the vast moral power of women with all its purifying influences, can be preserved to society.<sup>23</sup>

Even though the lobbying efforts that Stuart is most identified with since 1830 had been most effectively applied in Britain, his lecturing days in New York, as well as his petitions to Congress, demonstrate his deep commitment to orthodox political action. His tactics resulted from his commitment to government order. The consistency of his views allows the claim to be made that Stuart preferred an orderly government pursuing the wrong policies as opposed to anarchy. In this, Stuart was correct in stressing the consistency of his views, in contrast to the changes in Garrison's views over the last decade of antislavery activity. His innovative work in the Agency Committee days may have seemed radical, but he had been merely exploiting new opportunities within the political system. He may have claimed that those opportunities were enhanced by the "agitation of the public mind" in Britain in late 1831. But he also stressed that this was, "of course, only as far as is consistent with good order and the public peace." And he condemned "the outrages on the public safety which have so disgraced one or two places." Stuart was equally committed to government authority in the United States. In letters to James Birney, Stuart wrote, "God invests civil governments, with corrective powers, without limit, for the support of good, & for the punishment of evil doers." It must also be noted that there had been no inconsistencies in his related views on military force. Although he may have seemed to other abolitionists as an unlikely military pensioner, he had never been an unqualified pacifist. He had not repudiated the views he had published as long as before 1820, when he defined the circumstances in which war was justified. He had on that occasion expressed his "most affectionate admiration"

for the papers published by the peace societies. In the Scriptures, he had found "the most lucid and undeniable condemnation of the whole spirit of contention." This served to reinforce his emotional abhorrence of the cruelties of warfare. But he had also found compelling scriptural authority in support of "defensive war" and in certain circumstances he would go further. For instance, the war against "the gigantic and horrible power of Bonaparte, was an exception, and, generally speaking, fully warranted all the measures, of which I am aware, that were taken against him."<sup>24</sup>

Although this consistency makes Stuart's explanation of his position both honest and more accurate than those of his critics, even he had not told the full story of his opposition to Garrison. His critics might have been wrong in seeing his behavior as insane or erratic. They were not wrong, however, in identifying an underlying emotional intensity. To Stuart, the antislavery cause was a substitute for almost all other emotional outlets. His dogmatic views about female decorum and modesty, which he had developed in India and Canada, can be linked directly to his attitudes on the women question. Stuart wrote, "Women were made to be our protectors, by their delicacy, and modesty, and sweetness; by attracting us to all gentleness, and holiness, and truth." These words, written in 1820, were echoed in his polemical insistence in 1841, on "the vast moral power of women, with all its purifying influences." But more important than the conventional social attitude expressed was the accompanying intensity of feeling. It was a sensitive Stuart who had experienced "real distress" on seeing women exposed to "profaneness, levity, and noise" in the frontier societies. It was a passionate Stuart who was attracted to, but at the same time discomforted by, women, who had

pleaded for modesty "by all that is lovely in yourselves" on the part of those "whose glance is so capable of filling us with despair, or firing us with unconquerable resolution!"<sup>25</sup> Following the failure of his courtship with Cornelia Weld, the antislavery cause had provided a lasting focus for his passion. It became more important to him emotionally than even his friendship with Theodore Weld. While still writing to the younger man with words of love, time and time again, he found himself apologizing for hurried notes, long lapses in writing, and delayed or cancelled reunions. As intellectually consistent as Stuart's attitudes toward Old Organization may have been, Garrison's real crime was to have diluted and diverted the movement that had offered Stuart his deepest fulfillment.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Stuart to Smeal, March 8, 1841, in *Resolutions of the Glasgow Emancipation Society*, p. 24, Mitchell Library, Glasgow; Stuart to Weld, March 1, 1841, Weld Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Estlin to Anne Warren Weston, October 11, 1851, Boston Public Library.

<sup>3</sup> Fanny Tribe to M.W. Chapman, June 11, 1852, Boston Public Library.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart, *Oneida and Oberlin: Or, a Call Addressed to British Christians and Philanthropists, Affectionately Inviting Their Sympathies, Their Prayers, and Their Assistance, in Favour of the Christians and Philanthropists of the United States*, Bristol, 1841, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Stuart to Weld, September 25, 1841, Weld Papers.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Tappan to J.H. Tredgold, June 18, 1841, in Annie Heloise Abel and Frank J. Klingberg, eds., *A Side-Light on Anglo-American Relations 1839-1859, Furnished by the Correspondence of Lewis Tappan and Others with the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society*, 1927, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Grimké to E. Pease, February 11, 1842, Taylor, *British and Foreign Abolitionists*, p. 163; E. Pease to J. Collins, October 15, 1841, Boston Public Library.

<sup>8</sup> *Liberator*, May 7, 1841, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Garrison to E. Pease, May 15, 1842, Boston Public Library.

<sup>11</sup> *Liberator*, October 23, 1840, p. 170.

<sup>12</sup> *Liberator*, May 21, 1841, pp. 82-83.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, May 28, 1841, p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> Garrison to E. Pease, May 15, 1842, Boston Public Library.

<sup>16</sup> J. Collins quoted in *Liberator*, May 21, 1841, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Sturge to G.G. and M.W. Chapman, April 5, 1841, Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 146.

<sup>18</sup> E. Pease to J. Collins, November 16, 1840, Boston Public Library.

<sup>19</sup> R. Webb to J. Collins, January 7, 1841, Boston Public Library.

<sup>20</sup> Murray described his interrogation of Stuart and reproduced a copy of Stuart's reply, dated November 15, 1840, in J. Murray to J. Collins, December 23, 1840, Boston Public Library.



<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Aileen S. Kraditor, "An Interpretation of Factionalism in the Abolitionist Movement," in Richard O. Curry, ed., *The Abolitionists*, 1965, pp. 76-88.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*; J. Murray to J. Collins, December 23, 1840, Boston Public Library; Stuart's circular reprinted in Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Weld-Grimké Letters*, II, pp. 858-860.

<sup>24</sup> Stuart to Birney, September 30, 1836, Weld Papers; Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, pp. 189-192.

<sup>25</sup> Stuart's circular reprinted in Barnes and Dumond, eds., *Weld-Grimké Letters*, II, p. 860; Stuart, *Emigrant's Guide*, pp. 125-127, 162-163.

## CHAPTER 12

### STUART AGAINST MAINSTREAM ANTISLAVERY THOUGHT

For over a year since the world convention in June of 1840, the campaign against the Old Organization had consumed Stuart's energies to the exclusion even of his relationship with Theodore Weld. In October of 1841, he wrote to Weld, "My Theodore, most dearly beloved & longed for," apologizing for the brevity of his recent stay in America. Weld had been unwell when he left. Stuart wrote:

How could I go! but I went.... What good could I have done by staying? It will not always be so, my Theodore: There is a land of promise; and I know, when the long Sabbath of the tomb is come, we two shall meet in Christ to part no more.<sup>1</sup>

These were not yet the words of one weary with the world, for he maintained a lively interest in the American political scene and went on to demand a few lines to "tell me, how you are...how you all are...how the cause of the Slave is doing...how is dear little Charley & how [is] smiling Theodore."<sup>2</sup> But events would prove this to be almost the last time he would contemplate eternity with the old buoyant enthusiasm for the challenges of the present life.

For the past few years, occasional references to advancing age and declining vigor had appeared in his letters. It would no doubt have become increasingly difficult for him to maintain his activities with the same level of

energy that he had shown two years earlier in the West Indies. But the real reason for the onset of pessimism and bitterness in his private correspondence over the next two years was emotional rather than physical. American divisions had isolated him from his most likely British allies. It isolated him from George Thompson, whose search for alternatives to slave-grown produce should have appealed to Stuart, a hard-line boy-cotter. He was also isolated from the Irish and Scottish abolitionists who, unlike the English, were the only other people who shared his single-minded interest in American slavery.

The early 1840s saw severe economic depression give rise to demands for fundamental political reform in Britain and to the movement for free trade. These preoccupations were not directly antagonistic to the antislavery movement. Many free traders proclaimed themselves to be abolitionists. Joseph Sturge also demonstrated, in his support for the more moderate wing of Chartism, that it was not only the supporters of Old Organization, such as Elizabeth Pease and George Thompson, who were politically radical. These domestic problems, however, may have made the antislavery movement more attractive to the members of the middle class who sought the fulfillment of good works while shying away from the uncertainties of radical domestic reforms. Undoubtedly, however, for many abolitionists, it was less clear than it had been a decade earlier exactly what their priorities should be, now that the Negro was free everywhere in the British Empire.

Charles Stuart was one who had no such doubts. He remained as committed as ever to widespread grass roots provincial agitation. He was equally certain that the overthrow of American Negro slavery should remain the main

objective. His former influence during the Agency Committee days, as well as his role in battling Collins, were giving way to new realities. Once Collins had departed, the American feuds could not indefinitely be used to inspire actual and potential rank-and-file abolitionists with a sense of purpose. It could be argued that thirteen years of almost manic antislavery energy were giving way to the depression and frustration of old age.

Stuart had become increasingly at odds with Broad Street over the question of slavery in British India. His preoccupation with the campaign against Collins had blinded him temporarily to the growing commitment of the national society to the Indian issue. As Broad Street passed a number of resolutions against slavery in British India, however, Stuart soon realized how out of step he was with the changing trend in antislavery thinking. As the controversies over the American split faded into the background in the autumn of 1841, he wrote to Weld complaining that the "grossly exaggerated statements, as I deem them, of the B. & F.A.S. Society in relation to British India," were a major obstruction to his antislavery activities.<sup>3</sup> Stuart believed that the way forward for the movement was to create a large infrastructure of provincial groups as auxiliaries to the national society. But he refused to work toward that goal until Broad Street agreed to publish his dissenting views on the issue.

On December 31, accompanied by William Blair, Stuart attended a meeting of the Broad Street committee, convened to discuss his criticisms of the society's stance. After he and Scoble had presented very different views about the nature of slavery in India, it was agreed that Stuart should be given space to make

his case in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*.<sup>4</sup> Within a week, he had dispatched a letter that occupied three columns of the paper's January 12, 1842 edition.

Stuart stressed that he did not object to the society's attack on Indian slavery in itself. His goal was "the immediate and thorough extripation of every vestige of slavery from the whole dominions which God has given us." With his usual honesty, he admitted that "some features of slavery" existed in India; that "unspeakable atrocities are sometimes perpetuated under shelter of those features"; and that "these facts are disgraceful to our government, implicate us all in guilt, and ought to be attacked and extripated immediately, by every right means in our power." He even expressed a sense of urgency because current schemes to increase investment in Indian sugar and cotton threatened to aggravate the bondage that did exist. The crux of his complaint was that, despite these important qualifications, "the bondage yet existing in Hindostan" was much less of a problem than society's spokespeople were suggesting.

With local exceptions as to *agrestic* bondage, especially excepting Malabar, and with *occasional* exceptions, as to domestic servitude, especially in the Mohammedan Zenandahs, the *actual condition* of those under bondage in our territories, generally speaking, *is so free from suffering* by their bond-condition, that, properly speaking, it cannot be *fairly* called *slavery* at all, when we mean by slavery a thing which involves not only the grossest legal wrong, but, generally speaking, severe actual oppression.<sup>5</sup>

Stuart argued that the contrary exaggerations of his opponents were an obstacle to the reform of actual wrongs "because facts alone can permanently sustain assertions." He found their crude generalizations an affront to his "personal knowledge of India, from a residence of thirteen years," and he accordingly prefaced his arguments with a lucid account of the various legal codes

in India, Hindu, Moslem, and British, and their interaction, especially with reference to slavery. But above all, however, his opposition was clearly founded on the unspoken assumption that the national society's exaggeration of the Indian problem diverted resources and energies away from the abolition of Negro plantation slavery. For this reason, his account of Indian slavery consisted of an implicit but detailed comparison with all the most grievous faults of the Negro system.<sup>6</sup>

Indian slaves could hold property "as securely as other men." They were rarely sold against their will, and "very extensively their bondage is not inherited by their children." A large portion of them had been sold into slavery as children by their parents "during famines or seasons of extreme distress, in order to save their lives." Often they came to be treated as part of the extended family with duties "not infrequently lighter than that of hired servants." When engaged in agriculture they were "very rarely driven," and much of their time was their own. Marriages among slaves were "sacredly performed" and in general "as sacredly regarded as any others." Underlying all these redeeming features were the comparative mildness of both Hindu and Moslem slave codes and enlightened controls of British administrators, who were themselves forbidden to hold slaves. Finally, to put the question into perspective, Stuart insisted that slaves formed at most one-twentieth of the population of 80 to 100 million people and that "judging as fairly as I can from all evidence before me, less than one twentieth of these, that is less than one four hundredth of the whole population, are suffering any actual infringement of their wills." The evidence before him, he stressed, was not only from his own extensive knowledge of India but also from various official

publications, including “nearly 1000 pages” of the parliamentary papers, *Slavery in India*, published in 1828.<sup>7</sup>

Despite Broad Street agreeing to give Stuart a hearing, his desire to help establish auxiliary societies was not endorsed by the Committee. The weeks of argument with Broad Street made it apparent to Stuart how far apart he and the Committee were, and it produced a kind of despondency in him, which became apparent in a long letter he sent to Weld in February of 1842. He referred to his recent difficulties with the Committee over the issue of Indian slavery but reserved most of his hostility for the “disgusting and ridiculous” spectacle of the United States. Stuart blasted:

Applauding liberty, yet keeping slaves!...calling the slave trade piracy if practiced in Africa, but ready to wade thro' blood to honor & sustain it in America! Boasting of freedom, yet trampling upon free & generous discussion! Pretending to be brave, yet skulking like cowards from the light of truth! Professing religion, yet grasping as tenaciously as the idolater of India, clasps its juggernaut, its gross idolatry of white, & its atrocious abhorrence of colored skin! The spires of its churches pointing heavenward thro' the land; and the interior arrangements of its churches, proclaiming not only without shame, but boastfully, the dominion of Satan within.... What a loathsome and portentous spectacle!... What a jest to demons! What a grief to Angels, if angels can mourn.<sup>8</sup>

Stuart's hostility to the American system was not new, but this level of scorn was. His disenchantment with American democracy was reinforced by a growing distaste for new democratic tendencies in Britain. He recognized the existence of “old abuses yet cherished” as well as “providential disadvantages.” But the main problem in Britain was the “abuse of liberty.” Government would have rectified the abuses “but for the insane measures which have been adopted to precipitate a change; and the bold pursuit of which threatens national

convulsion.”<sup>9</sup> The main reason for this concern is to be found in Stuart’s fervent commitment to abolition, which for a long time had made him largely indifferent to domestic turmoil. In late 1841 and early 1842, the same commitment made it possible for him to ignore the turmoil.

During 1837 and 1838, Stuart had been too preoccupied with the campaign against apprenticeship to give much attention to the proliferation of radical societies petitioning for the “six points” of fundamental electoral reform that were soon adopted as the “People’s Charter.” In a July 1838 letter to Weld, he had seen the government as unduly repressive toward would-be domestic reformers. But the main inspiration for his hostility had seemed to be that “the ministry of the day, of course, supports the abomination of slavery.” And he had shown his distaste for the mounting radicalism by concluding that:

...the cause of reform (I mean social and political reform) has been rolled back, in great measure, by the extravagances of many of its votaries, as much, by the rousing & banding together & concentration of the forces of its enemies.<sup>10</sup>

Even more revealing of his attitudes is the fact that that these comments were a tiny interpolation in a long account of the imminent success of the fight against apprenticeship, with the climax due within a few days on August 1. It was that distant event, rather than the formal launching of the Chartist movement in Birmingham on August 6, which had monopolized his attention as he worked in London as acting editor of the *British Emancipator* and prepared for his extensive tour of the West Indies.

Stuart had been in the West Indies throughout 1839, while the Chartist agitation gathered momentum and the Anti-Corn Law League held its first



national conferences. The Chartists riots in Birmingham and the rejection by Parliament of the first Chartist petition in July of 1839, coincided with his arrival in Jamaica and the beginning of the most intensive part of his West Indian tour. Stuart was still totally preoccupied with the Jamaican situation as Chartism moved closer to open insurrection, particularly in South Wales and Yorkshire in November of 1839. That first phase of the agitation was long past, with many of its leaders jailed or transported by the time he had returned to Britain in May of 1840. For the next year, however, he could hardly have been unaware of reform agitation, because Chartists were interrupting antislavery meetings on a regular basis. For the time being, he was able to ignore Chartism until after his five-month visit to the United States which ended in September of 1841.<sup>11</sup>

The Chartists disrupted antislavery meetings because they believed abolitionists were concentrating on distant evils to the detriment of more immediate domestic reform priorities. That charge has long since been severely qualified by historians who have examined the wider reform goals of many leading abolitionists. Stuart's old friend, Joseph Sturge, stands out in particular as one with a most comprehensive social conscience. In late 1841, he made an imaginative attempt to reconcile Chartism with the anti-Corn Law agitation which most Chartists had regarded as an employer's movement, indifferent or hostile to working class problems. Sturge's *Reconciliation Between the Middle and Labouring Classes* urged the formation of "Complete Suffrage Associations," which would press both for repeal of the Corn Laws and suffrage reform. By early 1842, the plan had won over large numbers of less revolutionary Chartists.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to Sturge, Stuart embodied the old stereotype of an abolitionist blind to the domestic scene. His attitudes to reform were completely opposite those of the Chartists. By early 1842, Stuart could no longer ignore domestic upheaval because he thought it was obstructing his own goals. He did not name Sturge in his letter to Weld, but there can be no doubt that Sturge was on his mind when he remarked, "The zeal with which some of our leading friends enter into other questions, will I apprehend, much impede the Anti-Slavery cause."<sup>13</sup>

These trends deeply affected Stuart. The British political ferment prompted him to confide to Weld that "were we not assured by evidence which we cannot doubt, that the Lord reigneth, we might well despair." In a postscript to the same letter, addressed to Angelina and Sarah Grimké, the comments on his own frailties, which had crept into some previous letters, took on a more serious tone.

I begin to realize forcibly the truth that 'age is dark & unlovely' ...it seems to be chilling my soul, and I often feel, as if the only suitable place for me, would be some chimney corner, away from human bustle, where I might quietly fade away, without notice.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps in addition to depression about aging, the reality of the mood of the country and of many of his abolitionist friends reminded him how far they were from accepting his urgent antislavery message. In the face of these new trends, Stuart continued to travel and lecture, attempting to win greater public support for the antislavery cause. It was difficult, however, to revive the political antislavery sentiment that flooded Westminster with petitions during the 1830s. Stuart was aware that the antislavery cause was languishing because domestic problems seemed much more urgent than Negro slavery.<sup>15</sup> Stuart confronted this issue head on by publishing *The Anti-Slavery Cause in 1842*. In it, Stuart argued:

Is not slavery abolished in the British territories? Do not the heathens and Jews demand all our sympathies? Or, if we could multiply ourselves a hundredfold, would not the ignorance, the crime, and the misery at our own doors; the consuming poverty which is around us, pressing upon multitudes of the worthiest of our land; and the political strifes, which threaten our very existence; would not...ought not...these to engage our every energy? Yes; Slavery is abolished in the British territories, except some scattered dregs in Hindostan. The wants of the Heathen, especially of the female part, and of the Jews, are indeed heart-rending; and our domestic condition calls in thunder upon every heart.

But after conceding all this, he asked, "What misery equals the misery of the slave?" He described in detail the oppression of "about 6,000,000 of our immortal fellow men" and gave an equally detailed breakdown of the numbers of slaves in the different parts of America.<sup>16</sup>

In answering his own rhetorical question, Stuart asked, "What can we do about all this?" He discussed and rejected the possibility of physical force, opting instead for moral force, i.e., "by conversion; by corresponding; by removing the ignorance and misconceptions" that surrounded slavery. This, in his opinion, could best be done "by anti-slavery associations auxiliary to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society; because that Society is upright in its principles, energetic in zeal, and loyal and peaceable in its measures."<sup>17</sup>

In his endeavors, Stuart enjoyed some successes. He spent a week staying with two sisters, Sarah and Elizabeth Dymond in Taunton. In a letter from Sarah to Angelina Weld, she wrote:

I frequently receive news of the progress of the [American] anti-slavery cause, but our beloved brother Capt. Stuart recommends a more extensive correspondence, and named you my dear Sister as one who would not object to send[ing] a line sometimes to one who having labored in a humble way for years in the cause in our own

country, and rejoiced in its ultimate triumph, is now longing and praying for the victory of freedom and religion in yours.

When I say that I have been engaged in Anti-Slavery efforts for many years I would not compare the labours of the Women of England with the labours and sacrifices of the Anti-Slavery Women of America, for we have had no sacrifices to make, no persecutions to endure.... Yet we can sympathize with you in your more arduous and difficult undertaking, and some of us would gladly if it were possible cross the Atlantic and assist you...but that is not requisite, and I would only say for myself, that if you tell me what I can do to aid your cause, if it lies within the scope of my limited abilities, I am ready to do it.... My Sister and myself have had the happy privilege of entertaining Capt. Stuart at our little cottage for a week past, and his sweet spirit and Christian conversation has been quite delightful to us; he gave a public lecture on Slavery, particularly American Slavery, a few nights ago at the Friend's Meeting house in this town which was well attended and I think much interest was excited by his eloquent and solemn appeal; our ladies' Society was reorganized or rather a new Society formed the next day, and I hope we shall not again slumber until our brethren and sisters in bonds are released from their fetters. Capt. Stuart is gone this afternoon to lecture in a neighbouring town but we expect him back tomorrow, and he has promised to write a postscript to this letter.<sup>18</sup>

Sarah Dymond's letter reveals not only that Stuart continued to travel, speak, and organize, but also something of the complacency of the British people regarding American slavery. Such complacency must have been frustrating and deeply disappointing to Stuart who labored away using the same grass roots approach he had a decade ago. In a somber postscript to Sarah Dymond's letter, Stuart wrote:

I have been travelling almost incessantly since April last in the same sacred cause.... Mercy has been rich and sweet and free to me all the time. The cause only wants persevering, affectionate and faithful advocacy. The heart of England is open to it, but there is still immense ignorance in that heart, and the horrible parties which distract us, politically, ecclesiastically, and even religiously, sadly keep its ignorance from light. I wish that you and Sarah and Theodore could be led to undertake a missionary Anti-Slavery tour to our island; but the wish is like a gleam of sunshine, obscured

almost at the moment of its shining by the rolling clouds of a stormy sky.<sup>19</sup>

Stuart had received little support from Broad Street in his desire to rekindle something of an organization resembling the Agency Committee days of agitation. With Stuart acting as a lone voice and desiring more help in the field, it's little wonder that the thought of having the Welds to assist him in Britain seemed like a dream. The reality that many of his old antislavery colleagues did not share his enthusiasm for grass roots campaigning added to his sense of frustration. A letter to Theodore Weld reveals the deep pessimism he had been able to hide during much of his tour:

The present Anti-Slavery posture of this country, I regard as decidedly worse than it has been for several years. Our ministry (I mean, our Colonial Secretary's Office) seems to me clearly pro-slavery & compromising. The anti-slavery heart of the nation wants re-rousing, and we can obtain no adequate means of re-rousing it. Several of the oldest and staunchest friends of the slave are departed...and some of the noblest & most energetic now existing, have greatly lost their Anti-Slavery influence by plunging into political strifes.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, Stuart remained bitter about the American divisions. In a previous letter, Weld had extended an invitation for Stuart to represent the New Jersey State Anti-Slavery Society at the second world convention in London later that year. Stuart responded that he would be "delighted" to accept, if the New Jersey society was free from "the Garrisonian dogmas." Despite his other preoccupations, he had clearly kept in touch with the American scene, stating that the accounts he had lately read, especially in the *American Anti-Slavery Standard*, made him regard the Garrisonian society "as more destructively hostile to emancipation, than even the corruptions, loathsome & dreadful as they are, of the

church.” He hoped that no Garrisonians would come to the convention “except they come merely as Anti-Slavery men (not women), and leave their peculiarities, so destructive of love, so hostile to liberty, so fatal to harmony & so discordant with truth, behind them.”<sup>21</sup>

His letter was characteristically full of fervent affection, not only for his “Dearest friend & brother of my soul, my Theodore,” but also for Angelina, who had recently written “kind Baby talk” about the Weld children. In a postscript to her, he wrote:

Thank you a thousand times for the generous love which thus leads you to bring up your precious children, to love your absent friend, so little worthy of any love...and yet thro’ Grace the object of love so surpassing.<sup>22</sup>

Yet underlying this characteristically loving style was a growing emotional tension that reflected more than the frustrations he was experiencing in his antislavery efforts. Weld had informed Stuart that he had refused to join the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, something Stuart regretted very much. Although he wrote wistfully of a possible visit to England by the Welds and rather more firmly of his own hopes to visit the United States the following summer, his recent correspondence from Weld had pained him:

Thy letter pains and refreshes me, my Theodore; refreshes me by its fulness of love; pains me by the evidence which it gives of the wide differences between our views of Christian character, as well as of the national societies which labour for the peaceful abolition of Slavery by lawful means. These things would have given me much more pain some years ago; but I have learnt to judge others less by [my] own standard than I used to do; and to leave those whom I love without anxiety in the hands of their own master. My own devotion to the Truth, as I deem it in Jesus, is at least as decided as ever.<sup>23</sup>

This was not a hollow claim, because in the same letter he wrote warmly of their old mentor, Charles Finney, who had offended them and most abolitionists in the 1830s by advocating racial segregation. He welcomed the news that his sister Anne had joined Finney's congregation in New York. Although the evangelist had "sinned so enormously in relation to colour," Stuart had found such inspiration in Finney's teaching that "I should prefer his ministry, were it within my reach, to any other which I have ever heard."<sup>24</sup>

Yet these genuine expressions of tolerance did not mean that Stuart was any more relaxed or had a less fanatical commitment to his evangelical faith. This same letter made it plainer than ever that his faith was becoming as much consolation as inspiration. As he had done almost exactly one year previously, he concluded his account of antislavery frustrations by mentioning that only his certainty that "the Lord reigns" kept him from despair. He continued:

Oh what a great new treasure does my Bible appear to me, & with what awakened gratitude & admiration do I clasp it to my heart, when I think of the desolation of spirit that would shroud me, had I not God's own sure word to resort to, from human doctrines or opinions.<sup>25</sup>

He was more conscious than ever of physical decline and death, telling Angelina that it was "most probable that human nature's term will cease with me" before her "children's characters are fixed." And his anticipation of reunion after death with Theodore was both less jaunty and less theoretical than in previous letters. He wrote:

Ask your heart, & let it speak of your Charles; yet it will speak too favourably...believe by half, the remainder we shall realise, when this corruptible puts on incorruption & we shall rise complete in Him, against whom while yet in the body the old man in us, yet struggles.<sup>26</sup>



Stuart attended the world convention in London in June of 1843, as a delegate from the New Jersey Anti-Slavery Society. Unlike the convention in 1840, no Garrisonians were in attendance. Stuart continued to uphold the issue of American slavery to the convention and in a speech argued that "the American churches, with but a few honourable and increasing exceptions, were the great bulwarks of slavery."<sup>27</sup> Stuart's knowledge and experience, as well as his commitment, were so completely focused on North America that to his fellow delegates he hardly seemed British. This was apparent when Henry C. Howells from Pennsylvania, himself English by birth, mounted an attack on British abolitionism as comfortable and fashionable and unwilling to "stand in the face of danger" in the United States. When he mentioned "the good done by the delegation of George Thompson and Joseph Sturge," a voice called out, "Charles Stuart!" whereupon Howells retorted, "He is half American!"<sup>28</sup>

Stuart discovered that the main threat to harmony at the convention was not to come from American friction but from the issue of free-trade, and the activities of those British delegates who made "a hobby of free commerce," as the Garrisonians in the preceding Convention, did of women's rights."<sup>29</sup> Most ominous from Stuart's point of view was that the committed abolitionists who spoke in support of this policy included his closest British friend, William Blair. There is no recorded contribution to this debate from Stuart in the recorded proceedings of the convention. William Ewart, MP, expounded a typical free-trade abolitionist philosophy, arguing:

You ask me on what principle I have advocated the extinction of slavery in the British senate. I am a free trader. I have always held



this doctrine, that although I would, by the combination of a nation, put down, even coercively, the system of slavery and the slave-trade, yet our great pervading and animating principle must be, an extension of the commerce of the world. Commerce I believe to be the great emancipator.<sup>30</sup>

This view was an anathema to Stuart who finally interjected, "I trust that while I have a soul that can appreciate justice, liberty, and humanity I shall never be found uniting in any free trade which is supported by robbery and murder."<sup>31</sup>

Despite these controversies, Stuart's overall reaction to the convention was favorable. He reported to Weld that "Our harmony was unbroken, tho' not undisturbed."<sup>32</sup> Stuart wrote to Gerrit Smith on the same day reporting that there had been "a bold, tho' feeble effort...to set the duty of free trade, above duty to the slave." Yet he described the meeting as "exceedingly interesting" and concluded that the final session had been "one of the sweetest, the best, the finest, which I have anywhere seen." At the close of his letter, however, he made it clear that he did not really believe his own extravagant conclusion that the convention would "exercise an important influence on the liberties of the world."<sup>33</sup> Rather, they demonstrated why he was experiencing a growing sense of pessimism about antislavery prospects on both sides of the Atlantic. Stuart's exchange of letters with Smith may have assured him that Smith was not a Garrison supporter, but Stuart sensed a growing inability on either side of the Atlantic to come to grips with slavery. He wrote to Weld that:

Still England's eyes are but feebly opened, and her heart but faintly moved. You suffer from the proximity, we from the remoteness, of the abomination. Its contacts spreads corruption fearfully thro' your body, as a nation. Its distance leaves us ignorant of the horrible features of its reality, and amidst the distresses and difficulties, both public and private, which involve us, means

cannot be found so to spread and press home knowledge as to stir extensively the nation's heart.<sup>34</sup>

Stuart was now planning to cross the Atlantic one last time. He told Weld, "I am planning for my expatriation; for such I consider it; not expecting ever to see Britain again, in the body."<sup>35</sup> Stuart was being called across the Atlantic not by his duty to the antislavery cause but by family duty. His sister Harriet had recently died in New York, and he felt "solemnly called...to provide an humble, frugal home, for my remaining sisters, should they need it." To Stuart, America was politically more and more repellent to him, even more so than Britain. Stuart argued that:

Our government indeed has its faults, but compared with other human powers, I cannot sufficiently thank God for its excellencies.... With more executive power, we should be what Austria or Prussia, is.... With more democratic power, we should be what the United States are.... In one case the monarch would make & unmake right at his discretion.... In the other, the sovereign people, would do the same, as arrogantly and as outrageously.<sup>36</sup>

Stuart's return to America would bring about a reunion with Theodore Weld. Because of the widening gap in their religious views, this reunion, perhaps, brought him little comfort. His references to a reunion with Weld are almost secondary to his references to death, which had become more frequent over the prior two years.

My soul ever thirsts after thee my Theodore...but it thirsts after thee as a mate for eternity, not for time.... When, Oh when, shall we awake and be with God, to weep & to tremble, and part no more...no more, for ever!<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, Stuart was well aware that his antislavery career was coming to an end. He reflected on it by saying:

God, with years, is distinctly giving me a furlough, from the business in which I have been engaged. That furlough is becoming more & more legible to me, in every fibre of my body & soul, both evidently waning.<sup>38</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Stuart to Weld, October 21, 1841, Weld Papers.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> Broad Street's growing commitment to the issue of slavery in British India is reflected in the number of articles and comments on the subject that appeared in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* in 1841 and beyond; Stuart to Weld, February 21, 1842, Weld Papers.
- <sup>4</sup> British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society Minutes, December 31, 1841.
- <sup>5</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, III, 1842, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> Stuart to Weld, February 21, 1842, Weld Papers.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 18, 1838, Weld Papers.
- <sup>11</sup> G.D.H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People, 1746-1946*, pp. 279-291, London, 1964.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp. 140-141.
- <sup>13</sup> Stuart to Weld, February 21, 1842, Weld Papers.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> Cole and Postgate, *Common People*, p. 289.
- <sup>16</sup> Charles Stuart, *The Anti-Slavery Cause in 1842*, pp. 1-2.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> Sarah Dymond to Angelina Weld, November 4, 1842, Weld Papers.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> Stuart to Weld, January 31, 1843, Weld Papers.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, Called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and Held in London from Tues. June 13 to Tues. June 20, 1843*, London, 1843, p. 72

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>29</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 10, 1843, Weld Papers.

<sup>30</sup> *Proceedings of the General Convention, 1843*, p. 137-139.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>32</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 10, 1843, Weld Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Stuart to Gerrit Smith, July 10, 1843, Smith Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Stuart to Weld, August 14, 1843, Weld Papers.

<sup>35</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 10, 1843, Weld Papers.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, August 14, 1843, Weld Papers.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 13

### IRISH FAMINE RELIEF

In one sense, Charles Stuart had accurately foreshadowed his future in mid-1843. After one final controversy in 1844, he was no more than an interested spectator of antislavery issues in both Britain and the United States. His withdrawal from public activity leaves a vacuum in terms of newspaper and institutional records and make the next seven years of his life the most difficult to assess. In another sense, however, his intimations of approaching retirement proved to be somewhat premature. His "expatriation" from Britain would not be complete until 1850. His life continued to be marked with extensive travel before finally settling in Canada. The gaps in his correspondence perhaps reflect letters that have been lost as opposed to letters never written. But in the absence of a continuing commitment to the one great cause, Stuart became a kind of transient figure in the lives of his many acquaintances and friends. It was increasingly difficult for his friends to keep in close contact with him.

What can be known, however, is that, for the time being, Stuart had not slumped into the physical incapacity he had long been predicting. In 1847, John Bigsby, who had met him twenty-six years earlier at Amherstburg, met him by chance in Bristol, commenting, "I knew him instantly; there was the same carelessness about the outer man, the same restless zeal for the old object."<sup>1</sup> His

travels indicate he was still healthy and fit enough to be an active abolitionist. He still cared passionately about slavery. But he had not overcome his feelings of frustration that had grown in 1842 and 1843, when he found neither the public nor his fellow abolitionists sympathetic to his antislavery methods and goals. Adding to his sense of frustration had to be his eroding friendship with Theodore Weld.

Instead of returning to America in late 1843 as he had predicted, Stuart spent a month in Ireland and then spent the early part of 1844 embroiled in his last British antislavery controversy. Potentially it was the most bitter, because his main adversary was his dear friend, William Blair. When Blair had spoken at the 1843 convention in support of the abolition of duties on the slave-grown sugar, Stuart had listened silently. He had no doubt been appalled by Blair's stance and Blair's attempt, immediately following the convention, to form a new antislavery society based on free-trade principles. It is not difficult to imagine that Stuart and Blair had many opportunities to argue privately over this matter, but to no avail. Things came to a head when Blair, joined by George Anstie and Thomas Spencer, published a letter in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* on April 3, 1844, criticizing the opposition of the national society to the reduction of sugar duties and in effect urging its auxiliaries to repudiate the Broad Street leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Sturge made an immediate reply to these criticisms by pointing out that the national society was committed by its constitution to recommend the use of free-grown produce as far as practicable in preference to slave-grown "and to promote the adoption of fiscal regulations in favor of free labour." Sturge also insisted that this position was morally as well as constitutionally correct, a claim that was widely endorsed by numerous letters published in the next edition of the

*Anti-Slavery Reporter*. Prominent among the letters was one by Stuart. He wrote of the "devotion" of Blair and Anstie to the antislavery cause and of the "personal affection" he had for them. If any men could have shaken his "independent convictions," it would be these two. But his own conscience owed a greater duty to God, and when he believed his friends to be wrong in the sight of God, "then does wrong become doubly detestable to me." The question, he insisted, was simple, but he nevertheless contrived to express it in five variations on the theme. He wrote, "Ought we to urge our Government to give the same countenance to slavery as to freedom?" Slave sugar was the "bank and mint, and nerve and heart, of slavery, in the case in question."<sup>3</sup>

Whether as a result of this and the other published letters, Blair, some ten days later, had changed his mind. His letter to John Scoble was thought to be sufficiently important as to be published as a separate leaflet, rather than waiting for the next publication of the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*. His explanation made it clear that he had been no less convinced than Stuart that his attitudes were rooted in the basic principles of their common antislavery background. Where Stuart's position seemed to follow naturally from his long personal repudiation of slave produce, Blair's free-trade principles had been based on assumptions about the economic superiority of free labor, which had been more boldly stated than in Stuart's own *West India Question*. Even in his recantation, Blair insisted that "in the long run, and not a very long run neither [sic], the labour of the free man will displace and abolish the labour of the slave." But he had become convinced that "while the principles of free labour are working their way," the slaveholder,



knowing time was short, would make a "convulsive effort" to "reap a double harvest."<sup>4</sup>

While his long friendship with Blair must have made this change of heart particularly satisfying to Stuart, it could have done little to overturn his convictions that the antislavery movement had lost its sense of direction. On the sugar question, Stuart found himself in alliance with Broad Street and its most notable spokesperson, Joseph Sturge. Within weeks after the climax of conflict with Blair, Elizur Wright found him at odds with Sturge over suffrage reform. While the encounter with Wright was pleasant on a personal level, it could only serve to reinforce Stuart's sense of isolation, because the American's attitudes showed again how the unity of the 1830s had drifted into numerous directions. Impressed by Sturge's commitment to suffrage reform, Wright was nevertheless convinced that his attitudes on the sugar question were "a perfect absurdity." As for Stuart, who shared those "absurd" attitudes and opposed suffrage reform, Wright could only say, "What a mystery is man!"<sup>5</sup>

There was in fact nothing mysterious about Stuart's attitudes. It was simply that he found it much easier than most of his colleagues to arrange his reform priorities. Seeing domestic problems as distractions from abolitionism, he had none of the deep social concern that explained his colleagues' interests in a wider range of issues. Yet it would be too simplistic to categorize Stuart's relative indifference to domestic reform to mere conservatism. Underlying his conservatism was his rootless background and the compensation he had found for it in an ever more outspoken patriotism and in his evangelical religion. His patriotism had little to do with the real Britain. An overseas birth and a lifetime of

constant mobility left him with none of the normal enthusiasms for cities or scenery, culture or people, boyhood memories or family connections. His numerous surviving letters are void of such references. In his only description of an English region, he was an outsider seeing Yorkshire as "the Connecticut of England."<sup>6</sup> His loyalty was to British authority and institutions, whether in Westminster or the various outposts of the empire. From India to Canada, Stuart had relied on the British Empire to provide him with what little sense of national community he felt. In short, his loyalty was to an imperialism that did little to link him emotionally to the plight of the ordinary British citizen.

For Stuart, it was also becoming apparent that, the Bible was becoming another form of compensation for his growing sense of loneliness. By 1844, he was more often citing it as his only consolation while the antislavery movement, in his mind, disintegrated around him. At the climax of his dispute with Blair and Anstie, Stuart wrote:

My heart sinks within me when I find such views can be urged by such minds; and, had I not God's bible, with free access to it, for my own solemn and prayerful judgment of what God's own truth is, I should be saddened into the conviction that no such thing as truth or falsehood, as right or wrong, as benevolence or malignity, exist; but that all...are matters of opinion.<sup>7</sup>

Neither patriotism nor religion made him indifferent to human suffering, but in the years after 1844 they had a decisive influence on his relations with other abolitionists and on his own reform activities.

After delaying his departure, Stuart finally crossed the Atlantic in June of 1844. As he had predicted, most of his time was spent in Canada with his sister, Mary Rankin, and her daughters. It is also apparent that, during the next three

years, he remained detached from the major antislavery movements. While he subscribed to Broad Street publications, he showed no desire to involve himself in activities, not even British protests against the admission of Texas as a slave state in 1845.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to imagine he was completely indifferent to that development, yet there is no evidence to suggest he spoke out against it in any way.

Following the American antislavery split in the 1840s, the two rival national societies fairly quickly receded into the background as vehicles for conflicting antislavery philosophies. Many New Organizationists had concentrated on political action through the Liberty Party, which nominated Stuart's old friend, James G. Birney, for president in 1844. Theodore Weld, no longer actively campaigning, had spent this time in Washington, D.C., conducting research. He returned from Washington and opened a boarding school in his home in Belleville, New Jersey, where he, Angelina, and Sarah had been farming since 1839. Stuart's letters in 1845 and 1846 asked, with mounting urgency, whether his friend remained active in the antislavery and temperance causes. In the process, he revealed the essence of his own ideological commitment to reform, arguing, "The Anti-Slavery, and Teetotal causes, seem to me, eminently of God...not necessarily involving the regeneration of the being; but as removing barriers to that regeneration which render it next to impossible."<sup>9</sup>

For this reason, his concern about Weld's withdrawal from antislavery activities was secondary to concerns about Weld's retreat from scriptural orthodoxy. In November of 1845, Stuart wrote regretfully about "Pecuniary embarrassments," which had made it impossible for him to make a planned visit to

Weld the previous summer. He had strongly desired the meeting, not only to “refresh” their friendship but also because he was fearful that Weld was “declining from that noble walk of glorious usefulness” with which God had endowed him. His fears were still too vague for him to engage in argument, but a statement by Weld about “Scriptural religion” made Stuart anxious to receive a clear exposition of his friend’s views. Although Stuart expressed confidence that Scripture remained “the great foundation of your faith and practice,” doubts were clearly in the back of his mind as he continued, “I could not love you, as I do, without believing this fully.”<sup>10</sup> A quick exchange of letters before the end of the year brought renewed protestations of confidence from Stuart:

Yes, thou knowest my heart,...Yes, we are far from each other; and yet are not the bonds which unite us, as imperishable as He, whom we believe to be, the Author of our mutual love.... I shall be awaiting thy letters...but shall probably not attempt to reply to them, until they are concluded; for I shall wish to have thy profession all before me, ere I judge of its real character.<sup>11</sup>

Four months later, Stuart’s fears were being confirmed. The old passionate tone was still there as he began, “I thank thee, my Theodore, long dearly beloved of my soul, I tenderly thank thee for thy letter just received.” He indicated that Weld’s letter “still breathes the living love, for which I have always loved you, towards God as you know him, and the amazing love which I have always experienced from you.” But Stuart admitted that he did not understand Weld’s recent “profession,” and what he did understand, he did not approve. For all the letter’s initial tenderness, Stuart created a dense, impenetrable cloud around his friend:

I want to see through it...not that I may love you the less...but that I may love *you*, not a *fiction*. I may approve or condemn; but I am

persuaded that our love, apart from all other agreement or disagreement, is holy & eternal, in its measure, like Him, from whom it flows.<sup>12</sup>

When the cloud dispersed in the future, Stuart would prove unable to continue loving the real, freethinking Weld who emerged. The scriptural orthodoxy to which he now referred would then be reiterated in detail and *ad nauseam* as a barrier to affection between himself and others, as well as Weld. But even as his letters of 1845 and 1846 showed the inevitability of such conflicts with all who rejected his faith, they also revealed again another Stuart, who was deeply emotional, craving human warmth, and who would be the worst casualty in such schisms.

In 1848, Stuart visited Ireland, most likely in response to the horrors of the existing famine. His Irish antislavery activities had been considerable in the past and had given him knowledge of virtually every part of the island. Perhaps his motivations were personal, dating back even to his boyhood years in Belfast. Unfortunately, his surviving letters and the record of his antislavery activities provide no real information. Only his later marriage to a distant relation, whom he had known for "upwards of thirty years," would give a hint of the depth and range of his Irish connections.<sup>13</sup> If he went for personal reasons, the situation he encountered once there was too grim to be ignored by anyone with the personal affiliations or even a shred of the humanitarianism that Stuart possessed.

In 1830 and 1831, when Stuart had begun his antislavery activities in Ireland, the burning political question there had been neither the abolition of West Indian slavery nor the imminent reform of Parliament, which promised to make abolition possible, but repeal of the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland.

Stuart had not been indifferent to Irish poverty, but he had refused to join either the Irish nationalists or the American critics in attributing it to the English connection. Despite his close antislavery links with Ireland, he had always been cool toward the leading Irish politician of the age, Daniel O'Connell, who, although an abolitionist, had advocated the repeal of the Act of Union. In the 1840s, O'Connell had begun to urge repeal with more force but had nonetheless found himself at odds with a more militant Irish nationalism, which was still less to Stuart's taste. As a modest landlord, O'Connell could not go all the way with those who insisted that a full solution of Irish problems demanded fundamental land reform as well as the severing of the English connection. As a parliamentary politician, he could go none of the way with those who saw revolutionary violence as the essential means to reform.

More radical views had gained coherence in 1842 with the foundation of a Dublin newspaper, the *Nation*, by a group who became known as the Young Irelanders. O'Connell had seen the group as valuable allies on some issues but had tended to recoil from their extremism even before the onset of the great potato famine in the autumn of 1845 had acutely intensified the endemic Irish problems. O'Connell had died in 1847. He had seen various ineffectual British government responses to the Irish famine, such as the repeal of the Corn Laws, the initially secret organization of emergency food supplies, and the belated institution of an inadequate system of poor relief in Ireland, all of which failed to avert disaster. O'Connell had lived long enough to see widespread distress and death. He did not live long enough to see the climax of a nationalist agitation, which in 1848 threatened to add Ireland to the list of European countries shaken by revolution.

With a population of eight million, Ireland was one of the most densely populated countries in Europe. Because half of the population was totally dependent on the potato for subsistence, there had long been the potential for disaster. Every year, large numbers of people had been destitute for short periods. Periodically there had been longer-term local famines. Now, since 1845, the nation-wide and repeated failure of the crop had exposed the Irish to the catastrophic effects of famine and fever. To the Young Irelanders, the situation was the result, not only of the mysteriously root-rotting fungus nor of inadequate, almost punitive British relief measures, but of a land tenure system in which predominantly Protestant landlords had exploited a wretched peasantry. Under the leadership of John Mitchel, who had joined the movement as recently as 1845, and inspired by the outbreak of revolution in France, the Young Irelanders advocated armed resistance against Britain, repeal of the union, and popular sovereignty over the land.<sup>14</sup>

Charles Stuart was in Ireland at the climax of these events. While he was not insensitive to Irish suffering, he consistently held to the belief that Catholicism was the major plague in Ireland, and he took British rule for granted. This then meant that Mitchel's advocacy of rebellion violated Stuart's belief in orderly, constitutional political action. It also, however, exposed that Stuart's underlying assumptions about the benign role of British imperialism in Ireland were naive.

John Mitchel was arrested, and the rebellion that he predicted would follow his arrest never occurred. With the Catholic clergy hostile and the mass of the population too devastated by famine to rise, the remaining rebels were quickly isolated and suppressed by the government.<sup>15</sup> Although totally approving of these



trends, Stuart nevertheless saw the imposition of authority as an opportunity for his own response to Irish distress. For the next nine months, the Irish famine was to be the focus of his last sustained personal humanitarian enterprise.

From mid-1848, he devoted himself to "an exploring journey of three months, from north to south." As a man of private means, he was scarcely exposing himself to the same dangers as the masses, which faced starvation, not only because they had no potatoes, but because they had no money to buy alternatives. As a guest of the Protestant landlords, he moved among the exploiters as much as he did among the exploited. In his one letter to Weld from this "exploring" period, he revealed the rediscovery, after more than thirty years, of an old acquaintance from the East India Company, Theophilus Bolton Jones. There was no hint of Irish distress when he wrote of a pleasant stay on Jones' "fine hereditary estate" at Mohill, County Leitrim. Modern studies place Mohill in one of Ireland's most heavily depopulated areas in the 1840s. Yet Stuart's letter to Weld did not refer to a mass emigration; it merely requested Weld's help and hospitality for a nephew of Jones, "a gentleman in a fair and natural sense," who was emigrating to New York "in pursuit of those honorable prospects, which animate the ambition of most young men."<sup>16</sup>

Stuart eventually ended his explorations with a firm commitment to share the sufferings of the people of Cape Clear Island. He cast his lot with the Protestant clergy there and expressed that part of his reason in choosing this region was that the people were "more than usually free from the popish influence which so deeply blights the western and southern population of Ireland." He was active in organizing a Sunday school and regular religious meetings during the



week "from house to house." As the winter wore on, he continued to regard "Popery" as "our greatest external curse," though he had hopes that it was "tottering to its fall." Although such activities and comments reveal that Stuart's fundamental prejudices about Ireland were unshaken by the famine, his decision to spend the winter in this community was much more than an easy sectarian gesture.<sup>17</sup> The letter, part of the Weld Papers at the William L. Clements Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan, is undated but the date "Ca. 1846" is pencilled at the top, presumably by an archivist. This date is incorrect, because Stuart was in Canada in 1846.

Cape Clear Island was the most extreme southern inhabited point of Ireland. It was approximately three miles long and two miles wide, with a rugged, mountainous surface. Approximately 1,300 people lived on this small island, having a good water supply but depending entirely on fuel imported from Baltimore, its nearest point on the mainland six miles away. When Stuart arrived, the potato crop had failed completely with "not a green leaf or stalk remaining." Famine loomed "on the darkened horizon of the coming winter," and "again it threatens, with its accompaniment, fever, to waste the perishing people around them." Stuart wrote to Weld that the people were "some of the desolate, physically speaking of our fellow men.... I tremble at times throwing myself among them."<sup>18</sup> By December, the situation seemed even more desperate. Stuart wrote:

Their wretched habitations, filthy and furniture-less; the tattered rags of their clothing; the almost total want of means to employ them; and their consequent want of even half a sufficiency of the coarsest food; fill me at times with feelings of impatient despair;

and seeing how utterly unable I am to relieve their terrible wants, I am prompted to fly, and get out of sight of their wretchedness.

His faith, however, would not let him fly. He had committed himself to the winter's stay with foreboding but also with a sense of "precious privilege to have the opportunity, of thus far seeking to follow the Master, whom we love." He was still there at the end of February, reporting on a winter of "dangerous and severe" distress which had yet been not quite "so pitifully consuming" as he had expected. An alarming fever was prevalent, but it was "by no means general." His plans were uncertain, but as always, he was prepared for "God's leadings, wherever they may lead or keep me."<sup>19</sup>

His winter on the island had been an exercise in practical philanthropy rather than religious masochism. The eccentric figure that had arrived from nowhere to take board and lodging in a local farmhouse had not been content to organize Sunday schools and prayer meetings for the islanders. Rather, he arrived to share in their distress, and he invited them to share his income. And he had done his best to supplement his regular income with donations from his antislavery friends. His communications with the outside world took the form of appeals to people like Gerrit Smith and the Welds. While records are limited, it can be assumed that he wrote to and received donations from a wide circle of friends. His first appeal took the form of a printed leaflet describing conditions on the island and asking for "aid, that the poor, fed, comforted, and instructed in the scripture by your aid, may bless you; and that the God of the poor, whom you love, may acknowledge it." On the copy he sent to the Welds, he scribbled a request that the appeal be brought to the attention of their mutual friends.<sup>20</sup>

There is no way of knowing how successful these appeals were, but Stuart was persistent. When Gerrit Smith sent a mere four pounds, Stuart immediately replied, stressing the "perishing wants" of his neighbors and asking for a further fifty pounds. Although he wrote tactfully of the continual demands made on Smith's benevolence, he artfully tried to shame him into sending more. Fully understanding that even Smith's "great resources" were heavily in demand, he asked that the fifty pounds should be sent as a gift, if possible, otherwise as a loan. If Smith chose the later alternative, Stuart promised he would, "as soon as the winter is over, if preserved so long," seek out "some cheap spot in Britain or America, and scrupulously husband my means" in order to repay it within a year. The tactic was only partly successful. Stuart sent Smith a letter, thanking him for an unspecified donation with the comment that "I cannot wonder at your inability to help this little spot, to the amount solicited."<sup>21</sup>

By this time, however, the worst of the winter was over. Although Stuart would go wherever God led him, he now expected to remain no longer than early May. His letter to Smith showed a rekindled interest in the antislavery cause. Yet it also showed that his stay in Ireland had not only taken him away from British antislavery activity, but had accentuated his emotional and intellectual isolation from the American scene. Were the leading principles of the main American antislavery associations "scriptural" as they had been in the days when they first met in New York, "or do they compromise like some and boast and bluster like others?" These questions showed that his attitudes toward Garrisonianism had not mellowed or kept pace with American developments. Increasingly, the issues between Old and New Organization were of less concern to American

abolitionists than the emergence of slavery as the central political problem in the United States. Stuart demonstrated that he was aware that the recent war with Mexico had given the United States vast territories threatening the sectional equilibrium between North and South. But rather than probing the political complexities, his response was a cynical generalization about American democracy, "a plague spot leering with hypocrisy and crimsoned blood."<sup>22</sup>

Whether he knew it or not, the final "expatriation" he had predicted six years earlier was about to take place. His contempt for both American democracy and most abolitionists would make his retirement in Canada the least tranquil phase of what had always been a turbulent life. In Ireland, this last stage of his public life had revealed once again the strength of his religious dogmatism and the stiffness of his British imperialism. These were traits that would make it harder than ever to find common ground with his American friends in retirement.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Bigsby, *Shoe and canoe*, p. 246.
- <sup>2</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, V, 1844, pp. 50-52, 54, 56, 67-68, 77.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 56, 67-68, 77.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, William T. Blair, *On the Introduction of Slave-Grown Produce into the British Markets*, 1844.
- <sup>5</sup> Wright to B. Green, May 17, 1844, Boston Public Library.
- <sup>6</sup> Stuart to Weld, March 26, 1831, Weld Papers.
- <sup>7</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, V, 1844, p. 68.
- <sup>8</sup> Stuart to Weld, August 2, 1844, Stuart to Weld, November 2, 1845, Weld Papers.
- <sup>9</sup> Stuart to Weld, November 2, 1845, April 11, 1846, Weld Papers.
- <sup>10</sup> Stuart to Weld, November 2, 1845, Weld Papers.
- <sup>11</sup> Stuart to Weld, December 26, 1845, Weld Papers.
- <sup>12</sup> Stuart to Weld, April 11, 1846.
- <sup>13</sup> Stuart to Weld, April 22, 1852, Weld Papers.
- <sup>14</sup> R. Dudley Edwards, *A New History of Ireland*, 1972, pp. 158-175; J.C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland*, 1966, pp. 306-350.
- <sup>15</sup> Edwards, *New History of Ireland*, p. 175.
- <sup>16</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 3, 1848, Weld Papers; see map showing percentage decline in population, 1841-1851, in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-1852*, 1962, p. 260.
- <sup>17</sup> Printed letter signed C. Stuart, Cape Clear Island, Care of Rev. Edward Spring, Baltimore, County Cork, with additional hand-written comments addressed to Theodore Weld, n.d., Weld Papers.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> Stuart to Smith, December 12, 1848, February 21, 1849, Smith Papers.
- <sup>20</sup> Printed letter signed C. Stuart, Cape Clear Island, Care of Rev. Edward Spring, Baltimore, County Cork, with hand-written comments to Weld, n.d., Weld Papers.
- <sup>21</sup> Stuart to Smith, December 12, 1848, February 21, 1849, Smith Papers.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 14

### MARRIAGE, RETIREMENT, AND ISOLATION

Charles Stuart began what proved to be a fifteen-year retirement when he returned to Canada in 1850. While Stuart had been away, his friend Gerrit Smith had been nominated for president by the newly formed "Liberty Party Abolitionists." He ran on a free Constitution program but could garner a vote of only less than one-tenth of one percent.<sup>1</sup> Writing from his sister's home in Toronto, he showed a continuing interest in the American antislavery scene. Stuart, however, would never again be a part of that scene. He was already planning to move north of Toronto to some family property. From there, his mounting bitterness toward America and his former American friends would be the main feature of his declining years. Before he left Toronto, he seemed briefly to be seeking a new path to his long and cherished goal of international antislavery cooperation. In February of 1851, Stuart attended the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society and was elected to the potentially influential position of corresponding secretary.<sup>2</sup> George Thompson, who was visiting the United States, was quick to react to the possible implications of Stuart's appointment. He wrote to Anne Warren Weston:

I have received and read the proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Meeting recently held in Toronto, and also the rules and regulations of the Society formed at the same meeting. I recognise

in the officers of the Society some friends I have known at home. Charles Stuart is, I see, one of the Corresponding Secretaries, when I last met with him, he was a great Garrison hater, and I am afraid he remains so. I expect therefore to find the folds prejudiced against old organization.<sup>3</sup>

Thompson's worries about Stuart's influence were needless. Although letter writing was to be his major activity in retirement, there is no evidence to suggest that Stuart pursued the role with the Canadian society with the same intensity he had shown in younger years. He did not attend the annual meeting a year later and was never again an officeholder.<sup>4</sup> His only future antislavery activity would consist of local speaking engagements.

Such a withdrawal from public life might seem entirely normal for a man of seventy years of age. For more than a decade, he had referred to his waning physical powers, and for the rest of his life, his correspondence would return to the theme that "age is dark & unlovely." But when he referred to himself as "encrusted with age" in 1853, when he referred to his "crushing infirmities" in 1855, and when he mentioned his "incompetency to be publicly useful" in 1858, he was prematurely declaring an incapacity that was real only in the last three to four years of his life.<sup>5</sup> Only from 1862 onward was he too feeble to contemplate travel. His withdrawal was influenced by his growing distaste for America and many American abolitionists. But the most concrete reason for his withdrawal was that he began his retirement by getting married in 1852.

His wife was Rebecca Watt, whom he had known for more than thirty years in Ireland. He had told Weld that he always had loved her "as a pure and noble woman," but it was only in the last six months that his heart had been "conjugally drawn" to her. She was twenty-six years younger than he, yet

marriage in this case was not simply a means of providing for his own comforts in old age. Instead it involved an abrupt assumption of wider family responsibilities, for he acquired, as well as a wife, two dependent sisters-in-law and a father-in-law some fourteen years older than he.<sup>6</sup>

This unusual extended family, with a servant, Charles Grant, took up residence on a property at Lora Bay, an inlet on Georgian Bay and near the village of Thornbury in the Collingwood Township. They lived in an extensive log house with several large rooms, each with a stone fireplace, and various added wings, including one Stuart used as a study. The house had a veranda that ran the full length of the home and was surrounded by shrubs and flowers.<sup>7</sup> Stuart had acquired the property from his brother-in-law, Charles Rankin, who had surveyed this part of the Canadian wilderness for the government and had been the first settler in the Collingwood Township. In the early 1850s, complicated instructions for finding the property had to be given to potential visitors. Public transportation stopped at Barrie, some seventy miles away. There were only "tolerably convenient halting and lodging places" on the route through the woods to Collingwood. But even between there and Lora, it was necessary to hire a guide. This rustic environment, beautiful as it may have been, was not without its hazards. Once in March, the "northern blast of yet lingering winter" sent lumps of ice crashing among the waves on the lake, and, in the summer of 1856, a forest fire "rushed like a whirlwind thro' the adjoining woods, to the very verge of leaving us homeless."<sup>8</sup>

Despite its ruggedness, the area was undergoing rapid development. *The Canada Directory* for 1857 described an area passing beyond the frontier stage.



The Ontario, Simcoe, and Huron Railroad had recently been pushed through to Collingwood from where steamer services provided links to most parts of the Great Lakes farther west. But Stuart's emotional links with the United States were not to such places as Chicago or Milwaukee but south-east to New York. Yet with rail service in Collingwood, some fourteen miles away, it was still a demanding trip. Stuart told Gerrit Smith in 1858 that "Our roads continue all but impassable except for vigorous frames." And in an indirect way, these modern developments had made living there even more difficult. As early as 1854, Stuart had complained that these railroad projects had raised the wage levels so much that servants were almost unobtainable. By 1857, the lack of servants was making it almost impossible to keep the estate properly productive, "as we are all too old to do the work."<sup>9</sup>

Family responsibilities and physical isolation regularly frustrated his desire for more contact with American abolitionists. "Imperious duty alone" prevented him from attending the New York antislavery convention in 1852. One year later he was forced to cancel another visit at the last minute because of "the sudden and aggravated sickness of my wife, together with wildly tempestuous weather." No doubt the same problems confined him to a local role in Canadian antislavery circles, for he clearly would have liked to have done more. He wrote to Weld, "Here we are in a measure out of the world; exerting but feebly, the feeble power (the only power which we have) in the holy cause of God and humanity."<sup>10</sup>

Stuart soon came to regard his situation as an "exile" from more congenial company. In 1853, he told Weld, "The people around us are generally loyal, orderly & sober; but have little to develope in themselves, or in me, any of the

nobler powers of the mind.” It was an exile he long sought to escape by permanent removal, sometimes to Britain or Ireland, most often to upstate New York. Gerrit Smith and his wife regularly urged Stuart to move to Peterboro. Stuart was drawn to the idea and had outlined the requirements in great detail. He had even inspected properties and came close to making purchase offers. The move, however, would never be made. The reasons were complex and often focused on his latest disagreement with individual Americans or his disenchantment with American society. The most consistent factor, however, was his desire to provide permanently for his wife and sisters. He told Smith that this priority made it necessary to “abstain from many of the sweetest privileges of personal friendship.” The Lora property and his pension provided “a healthful and frugal competency” as long as he lived. Because he wished to provide for them after his death, his hopes rested on a steady improvement in the value of his land. Stuart figured that to sell and relocate to Peterboro would jeopardize these carefully calculated prospects. If God willed that they were to be poor, he was of course ready to accept it; “but to make ourselves poor for present gratification, however pure & sweet, would be a sin.” Eventually a temporary fall in land prices was a major factor that “crushed the hopes” he had of settling in Peterboro.<sup>11</sup>

Stuart’s devotion to his wife and her family could not transform Lora into a rustic paradise. His father-in-law regularly threatened to return to Ireland and finally did so at the age of ninety-five. He was accompanied by his younger daughter, Margaret, who marked her departure by secretly writing to Smith about Stuart’s suffocating zeal for the family’s welfare. The older sister, Isabelle,

appears in Stuart's letters only in a dismissive reference to "Rebecca's feeble older sister."<sup>12</sup> While all of this only hints at Stuart's controlling influence, it does suggest that Rebecca bore the brunt of her husband's personality.

For Stuart to marry at all so late in life may seem surprising, and the record does not make clear the motives of either party. Yet it is possible to see, in the fragmentary clues of his earlier infatuation with Cornelia Weld and in his published comments about feminine fragility, a long and frustrated yearning for an emotional relationship with a woman. Marrying at seventy-one, he is unlikely to have developed a sexual relationship after a lifetime of evident abstinence. The closest he ever came to mentioning sex was when he wrote to Weld that his union with Rebecca was "almost entirely a union of souls." But even without sex, after decades of exaggerated respect for ideal womanhood, marriage proved to be something of a shock to him. Six months after the wedding, he confided to Weld that Rebecca "is not all that either you or I could wish," although he quickly added what Weld knew too well, that of "how far I am from being such." While he wrote tolerantly of the "varieties of taste & habit & principle which exist every where in independent minds," the adjustment had been traumatic. He wrote that "Our differences when fully revealed to us after marriage, were full of deep agony to both of us." Perhaps he was able to write in this manner in October of 1852, because he believed some of the necessary adjustments had been made. Despite her faults, Rebecca had a "pure and holy soul," and taken altogether he concluded "she had a glorious heart."<sup>13</sup>

No doubt it demanded such a heart to take on Stuart in his old age. Stuart's long established personal regimen of abstinence from slave produce

became the household rule at Lora, and his wife and family were forced to find substitutes for cotton, sugar, and coffee.<sup>14</sup> How Rebecca tolerated this is difficult to determine. No doubt she had known Stuart well enough to not be surprised by this arrangement, nor with the dominant role that Bible reading played in their daily routine. But whether it was the difficulty of coping with Stuart's ideas or more generally with his personality, there are hints from early in their marriage of the stress Rebecca was experiencing. Plans the couple would make to visit the Smiths in upstate New York were always overshadowed by doubts about her ability to make the journey. After a visit was achieved in 1855, Stuart's letter of thanks to Smith remarked on the "temporary relief so sweetly & wonderfully experienced by Rebecca" during the visit. Since their return to Lora, however, "her *tic* pains have severely returned." Escape from Lora was not always so therapeutic. In 1857, a similar visit to Smith was aborted in Toronto when she became "alarmingly ill." Back at Lora, she returned to "her usual state of health, always poor."<sup>15</sup>

Stranded in the frontier environment he had so enthusiastically recommended to would-be emigrants decades before and constrained by domestic ties for the first time in his life, Stuart subjected the outside world to an intense and increasingly belligerent scrutiny. His return to North America coincided with the Compromise of 1850, a major attempt to reconcile the differences between free and slave states. This had become a very real threat to the Union because of the speed of westward expansion and the recent acquisition of large territories through a war with Mexico. The compromise admitted California as a free state but left the issue of slavery in the other new territories of Utah and New Mexico to

be settled by the natural process of popular sovereignty. People in the north were generally apprehensive at the thought of the expansion of slavery in the west. It abolished the slave trade in Washington, D.C., but balanced this by revitalizing the Fugitive Slave Law.

By the middle of the decade, the hollowness of the popular sovereignty doctrine was being revealed in Kansas, as pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces battled to ensure that nothing like a natural process took place. Stuart observed this battle with "pain" and not without impartiality. According to the *Recollections* of abolitionist Frank Sanborn, Stuart met the eventually notorious John Brown at Gerrit Smith's home in the summer of 1855 and gave him five dollars toward "arming the Brown family in Kansas." Sanborn reports that, during the meeting at Smith's house, he and Smith went for a walk while "Brown was left at home by the fire discussing points of theology with Charles Stewart [sic]."<sup>16</sup> Stuart left no doubt about his reactions to the Kansas situation. In 1856, when the pro-abolition Senator Charles Sumner delivered a two-day tirade on the floor of the United States Senate on the "Crime against Kansas," he was savagely assaulted by Representative Preston S. Brooks, who was wielding a walking stick. Stuart wrote a private letter to the victim, expressing his "earnest admiration for your Senatorial course" and said his soul burned at this "dastardly, assassin-like abuse."<sup>17</sup>

Stuart offered his thanks to Sumner "in behalf of your country, which on many solemn accounts I love; & which such conduct as yours, rescues in a measure, from the contempt & execration of mankind." But by this time, Stuart's love for the United States was rarely evident. In late 1855, he told Smith that the

Fugitive Slave Law was a major reason for his reluctance to move to the United States. He honored the efforts of Americans such as Smith who were resisting the execution of the law. Stuart's view was that, as American citizens, they had no option but to resist it if they wanted to be true to God. As a foreigner, he viewed the law as a symptom of a "base and hypocritical system."<sup>18</sup>

While this same letter acknowledged financial and family obligations that kept him in Canada, his estrangement from the United States was now profound. Certain friendships might lure him to visit, but the political and moral climate also repelled him. His revulsion was in striking contrast to the enthusiasm he had displayed twenty years earlier when he carried a copy of the Constitution around in his pocket and publicly extolled the virtues of American democracy. It is fair to say that Stuart's resentment of the United States was rooted in a kind of nostalgia. But it was a nostalgia that also ignored the practical obstacles to American abolition.

In the 1830s, Stuart lauded the virtues of the American Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. He had argued that, as written, they embodied the highest and holiest principles of morality. Thus, according to Stuart, all that was needed was to arouse the moral indignation of the American people against slavery and make the practice of American democracy conform to those principles. But events of the 1830s should have made it clear that the attempt to stir the conscience of the nation was politically counterproductive. While the South had closed ranks in defense of slavery, public opinion in the North had been violently hostile to abolition. Stuart had not expected this sectionalism at the time. On the contrary, he had found mob opposition almost exhilarating and had

left the United States optimistic. But since the 1830s, the chances of political solutions had become extremely complicated. The South's insistence on sharing in the massive territorial expansion of the nation had led to more northerners opposing the extension of slavery than had ever supported the abolitionists of the 1830s. But a great deal of that opposition was a racist determination to exclude black competition — slave or free — from jobs and land, and, as such, it was the antithesis of the morality embraced by Stuart.

In the 1850s, Stuart was occasionally willing to praise the principles contained in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, but his belief that the nation would willingly conform to those principles had evaporated. To whomever he wrote, Stuart expressed his constant disillusionment with American democracy. Stuart wrote that he yearned for Weld "amidst the degradation of your country, under the atrociously hypocritical & tyrant government of your slave-holding, slave-hunting, and slave-destroying democracy."<sup>19</sup> In writing to Gerrit Smith, Stuart insisted that "The democratic principle in human action, is a hydra-headed monster, full of the grossest hypocrisy, the most grasping ambition, the most lawless, impure & ferocious tyranny."<sup>20</sup>

This condemnation of American democracy did not make Stuart any more sympathetic to those who had criticized the United States long before him. In his nostalgia for the idealism of the 1830s, Stuart was still driven by and obsessed with the antislavery divisions that had ended the previous decade. Underlying all of Stuart's political attitudes was faith in the Bible as divine revelation. Often, this conviction led him into criticisms even of abolitionists of whom he approved. This is clearly evident in his relentless conviction that a concern for women's



rights violated the divine rule and ordering established in scripture. If these evangelical beliefs loomed in the background of every argument he had with Americans and the American system, they dominated the agonizing withdrawal symptoms that accompanied the end of his spiritual love affair with Theodore Weld. The severing of that emotional bond was perhaps the most significant factor in the alienation from America that marked his retirement.

Robin Winks has suggested that Stuart's religious dogmatism was a mask for religious doubts. The only source he cites in support of this claim, however, is Edward Talbot, the critic of Stuart's *Emigrant's Guide* in the 1820s.<sup>21</sup> During that period, Stuart had indeed undergone a religious crisis. By the time of his retirement, however, his correspondence and his publications had revealed decades of theological consistency to support his claim that his doubts had been resolved when he accepted the Bible as divinely inspired. It is possible, however, that the growing hostility and outspokenness, which characterize his life in the 1850s, was a result of inner anxieties as he approached death. Whatever the source of his bitterness in latter years, a good case can be made that much of it had to do with the changing attitudes of his friends and most notably, Theodore Weld. That Stuart could oppose his friends who had changed their opinions, to the point of painful and emotional alienation, suggests that Stuart's overriding religious convictions were very strong indeed.

Following the antislavery campaigns of the 1830s, Stuart and Weld met scarcely at all. Stuart had always been quick to explain the frequently missed opportunities for reunions as owing to prior duty to the antislavery cause or even to family responsibilities. But the rarity of their personal contact is such a marked



contrast to the continuing fervor of Stuart's letters to his "own most dearly beloved Theodore," that it seems he was at least half aware that their spiritually passionate friendship was now mainly an idealized memory. Even when they had been close in the 1820s and 1830s, they had differed widely over religious issues. In the 1840s, Stuart had claimed to believe that increasingly freethinking views were obscuring the real Weld. It was only now in the 1850s that he at last came to acknowledge that the real Weld repudiated completely his own unchanging scriptural orthodoxy.

The decisive moment of recognition came in an exchange of letters early in 1853. Although Weld's letter to Stuart has not survived, it is clear from Stuart's reply that Weld had, more firmly than ever before, rejected the notion that the Bible was "a divine revelation, the only recorded & authoritative standard, of His Being, His Character, and His Law; as well as of man's character & condition; of man's duties & prospects."<sup>22</sup> Throughout their previous correspondence over the past decade, Weld had prepared Stuart for this rejection. Yet he now acknowledged it with an even more emotionally tortured greeting than usual. Stuart wrote:

My long & dearly, dearly beloved Theodore; long the most intimate brother of my heart; earnest companion with me, in the cause of the slave; the fervent enemy of tyrannical & impure power; the lover & preacher & practicer of God's pure & unadulterated truth, as revealed by God himself, remote alike from the atrocious hypocrisy, of the great body of the outward churches in your country; and from the Christ crucifying atheism, of what is called or deemed, rational christianity; your letter of March 20th now before me, realises [sic] my worst fears; for while it warms my heart by its loving kindness to me, it smites my soul, with the fearful conviction, of the desperate aberration from God's truth of your present mind!<sup>23</sup>

Stuart continued with stark clarity how much more than religious differences were at stake. Perhaps the Theodore Weld, whom Stuart had idealized through their long separations, had assumed an importance in Stuart's emotional life that was unrealistic and unrepresentative of personal relationships. Stuart continued:

Such are my feelings towards you, that could I, as God's minister, bring you back to what you were, according to every appearance, for some time, after your change of life, under Finney's ministry in Utica & elsewhere, greatly as God has blessed me, as are my wife & her sisters, I could cheerfully consent to instant death, & glory in dying, for your recovery.<sup>24</sup>

Such feelings could not simply be discarded, even though subsequent letters confirmed that there was no hope of turning Weld back to his previous views. Soon Stuart was writing that a recent letter from Weld precluded all further religious discussion between them. But he could not resist "one or two parting thoughts," which occupied two pages on the usual theme that the Bible was the only acceptable indicator of God's will. Over the next few years, however, he would periodically resume the argument. But from mid-1853 on, he was desperately fighting to convince himself and his "dearly, dearly beloved brother" that religious differences could not mar their mutual love, "for that love is irrespective of creeds or opinions or principles."<sup>25</sup>

There was, however, less and less to keep that love alive. Stuart did send condolences on the death of Weld's mother writing, "I feel a blight upon my spirit, for she was ever sweetly precious, & sacredly dear to my soul."<sup>26</sup> He also wanted to know what Weld was doing for the antislavery and temperance causes and wrote of a planned visit to the Welds the following summer. Some seven

months later, a very brief note was much less effusive, as he wrote, "Leaving out the question, our differences of conscientious belief respecting religion, I wish to know, why you have not replied to my last letter, & what you are doing in the Anti-Slavery and T.T. causes."<sup>27</sup>

While at the time his plans for a reunion were still alive, a few weeks later he wrote to Weld informing him that a visit was out of the question that year. He complained about expense and social unrest in Canada, but it was evident that a larger factor in his decision to cancel his visit had been his belated letter from Weld in which he revealed to Stuart that the antislavery and temperance causes now played little part in his life. He, Angelina, and Sarah were about to leave their Belleville farm to settle in the Raritan Bay community of Perth Amboy, where Weld was to head the community's Eagleswood School. For Stuart, this was yet another reminder that Weld's new commitments and those cherished by Stuart were "as opposite as the Poles." He wrote, "I mourn for you.... Your Raritan Bay plan, wanting the scriptures for its basis and its rule, wants all that could be fundamentally agreeable to me."<sup>28</sup>

The following year, Stuart wrote to James Birney after many years and confided in him the extremes of his admiration and despair for Weld:

I thank God for such a man, & only wonder how such a one, can love as he does such as I am. I look up to him with admiration & with affection as deep as I believe it to be deathless. Yet, as far as I can judge of him, on any grounds within my reach, Theodore is one of the most melancholy & anomalous objects that could be presented to me.<sup>29</sup>

Stuart was now clearly sensing that, whatever he might say about his own "deathless affection," Weld was much less preoccupied with their friendship.

Some letters in these middle years of the 1850s make it plain, in their pleas for information about Weld and his family, how one-sided the friendship had become. When a reply eventually came early in 1856, it was "sweetly refreshing" to Stuart. Yet his relief indicated how much their friendship had withered as he wrote, "I begin to fear...that the wide & deep jarring of our souls, in relation to God's revealed truth, had wearied you of me."<sup>30</sup> Regretting that he had not followed through on his planned visit to see Weld the previous summer, he asked for details of the Eagleswood enterprise. He also inquired as to allowing one of Weld's children to write to him, unless Weld thought the correspondence "might hurt them."<sup>31</sup> When Stuart did receive a reply, including the information on Eagleswood, it pained him because of its lack of emphasis on the Bible. By now Weld was getting weary of the same argument and Stuart's reiteration of his commitment to the Bible. This letter marks a three-year break in their correspondence. When it would resume in August of 1859, it would be for a final time.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Robert Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, p. 334. There is no record in any of the known correspondence as to what Charles Stuart's opinion might have been about a Smith candidacy. Given their philosophical differences and the absence of any correspondence during this period, it is safe to assume that Stuart was less than enthusiastic about his friend's ambition.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart to Weld, November 5, 1850, Weld Papers; Stuart to Smith, n.d., 1850, Smith Papers; *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, VI., 1852, pp. 65-66.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson to Anne Warren Weston, March 17, 1851, Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 375.

<sup>4</sup> *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, VII, 1852, pp. 74-75.

<sup>5</sup> Stuart to Smith, September 30, 1853, November 27, 1855, March 14, 1857, February 6, 1858, Smith Papers.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart to Weld, April 22, 1852, Weld Papers.

<sup>7</sup> Stuart to Smith, September 26, 1857, Smith Papers; Landon, "Captain Charles Stuart," pp. 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17; Stuart to Weld, April 17, 1853, July 20, 1856, Weld Papers; Stuart to Smith, May 26, September 26, 1857, April 31 [sic], 1858, Smith Papers.

<sup>9</sup> *The Canada Directory for 1857-1858*, see entries for Collingwood and Thornbury; Stuart to Weld, June 30, 1854, Weld Papers; Stuart to Smith, September 26, 1857, April 31 [sic], 1858, Smith Papers.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart to Smith, May [?], 1852, September 30, 1853, Smith Papers; Stuart to Weld, October 31, 1853, Weld Papers.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart to Weld, October 31, 1853, Weld Papers; Stuart to Smith, April 10, 1856, August 15, September 26, 1857, February 6, 1858, January 1, 1859, Smith Papers.

<sup>12</sup> Stuart to Smith, April 19, 1859, May 22, 1861, January 18, April 19, August [?], 1862, Margaret Watt to Smith, August 25, 1862, Smith Papers.

<sup>13</sup> Stuart to Weld, October 15, 1852, Weld Papers.

<sup>14</sup> Landon, "Captain Charles Stuart," p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Stuart to Smith, August 31, 1855, July 11, 1857, Smith Papers.

<sup>16</sup> Frank B. Sanborn, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, 1909, pp. 144-145, 147.

<sup>17</sup> Stuart to Sumner, June 1, 1856, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; Stuart to Smith, November 27, 1855, Smith Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Stuart to Weld, April 22, 1852, Weld Papers.

- <sup>20</sup> Stuart to Smith, April 18, 1857, Smith Papers.
- <sup>21</sup> Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, Montreal, 1971, p. 264.
- <sup>22</sup> Stuart to Weld, April 17, 1853, Weld Papers.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> Stuart to Weld, July 31, 1853, Weld Papers.
- <sup>26</sup> October 31, 1853, Weld Papers.
- <sup>27</sup> May 26, 1854, Weld Papers.
- <sup>28</sup> Stuart to Weld, June 30, 1854, Weld Papers.
- <sup>29</sup> Stuart to Birney, March 6, 1855, Weld Papers.
- <sup>30</sup> Stuart to Weld, April 12, 1856, Weld Papers.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 15

### RELENTLESS DOGMATISM

By 1857, Stuart's estrangement from the United States had many components. In addition to his doomed relationship with Weld, he was facing physical isolation, the reduced mobility of old age, the burden of family responsibilities, contempt for the differences among American abolitionists, and scorn for a political system that proclaimed liberty and appeared increasingly to condone slavery. The deepening slavery crisis can only have confirmed this revulsion. In 1857, the Supreme Court's long-awaited and eventually famous decision in the Dred Scott case had declared that blacks were not citizens and that Congress had no power to exclude slavery from federal territories; therefore, the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had defined the boundary between freedom and slavery, was unconstitutional. In the following year, the nationally reported Illinois debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas would make it clear the extent to which two politicians of the major parties had to pander to a crude northern racism. Although these trends most likely vindicated Stuart's criticisms about America, rather than finding some satisfaction in the recent events, he continued to attack the United States and declare his reluctance to relocate there. In view of his deteriorating respect for American democracy, he

wrote to Gerrit Smith regarding his new financial considerations, which prevented his move to Peterboro, arguing:

My income depends mainly upon my country, and the idea of spending it in a foreign land, especially in view of recent events, is very repulsive to me.... [The] democratical-demagogical character of your country [is] more & more, a serious question to me, whether, I could wisely subject my wife & myself, to the liabilities of such a state of society.<sup>1</sup>

Even now, Stuart's disillusionment with the United States was not complete because his personal friendship with a few abolitionists survived. To a great extent, it was a tribute to the forbearance of these severely judged and criticized friends. Gerrit Smith had not only encouraged Stuart to move to Peterboro, but had become something of the financial manager of the Lora household. He coped with a rash of letters from Stuart, often seemingly irritated by petty distractions. While Stuart was always appreciative for Smith's assistance, the same letters included scathing attacks on Smith's prospects for eternal salvation, as well as repeated attacks on the American political system. Although Stuart regularly depicted himself as a financial simpleton, he was always ready to challenge Smith's advice and his math. In these circumstances, it was Smith's continuing good humor and graciousness that are a tribute to his benevolence and the strength of his regard for Stuart.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps these friendships also survived because Stuart, when he wished to, was able to separate policies from personalities. He wrote to Smith:

I love you anew for your affectionate tolerance of my earnest remonstrances on topics on which we differ...we must bear with each other, and I believe so many vital sympathies to exist in our mutual hearts that the task is not difficult.<sup>3</sup>



It may have been easier for him to separate issues from personalities because he was so remote. Perhaps if he had remained completely in isolation in Canada, his last years after 1857 would have been less bitter, although uncomfortable for Rebecca. But in 1858 and 1859, he managed two final journeys to New York and New Jersey, and the personal contact was sufficient to end his relationship with Theodore Weld and severely strain his relationship with Gerrit Smith.

In June of 1858, Stuart and Rebecca finally made a visit to upstate New York. Gerrit Smith's home was their base, but they also made a sentimental visit to Utica. Outwardly to those who met him casually, it was a frailer but no less endearing Stuart than the eccentric schoolmaster of thirty-five years earlier. He was helped hobbling into the office of Erastus Clark, who had been very young in the 1820s and who remembered Stuart mainly as a family friend and the teacher of his sisters. Clark recalled:

A year or two before the war, Captain Stuart came into my office, leaning on the arm of EDWARD S. BRAYTON. It was a pleasant summer afternoon, and the blinds were partly closed. As I stepped down from my desk and went towards him, I thought I had never seen a finer face than his. There was no lack of force in it, but in combination with the force, and dominating it, was a rare gentleness and love. I had not seen the captain for more than twenty-five years. I was very young when he resided here; my personal knowledge of him was scant, but I knew him well by reputation, for he had been a friend of my mother, and the teacher of my sisters.

His manner was very affectionate, he blessed me, and called upon God to bless me; he spoke of my mother who had gone, and of my sister in the South, expressed the hope that my sister and I were doing what we could for Christ, and for the poor and oppressed whom Christ loved. The impression his face made was very strong; his presence brightened the room.

A short time after his visit I told a friend of mine, and a countryman of his, one who very closely resembles him in some of

his noble traits, that a Scotchman had been in my office that afternoon, that he stopped but a few moments, but that he brought with him the sunshine, and when he went away it was dark. I spoke of the impression to another friend, a man not given to foolish fancies, and he told me that when Captain STUART was praying his face seemed to be transfigured.

There is no absurdity in all this. The Greek, the Roman, and the Norman faces, have attracted notice and admiration for ages, for beauty, force, and conscious superiority; the result of national characteristics and surroundings; and it surely is no marvel that great humanity, that a life of self-sacrifice for others' good, that fifty years of earnest work for what he deemed to be the glory of God, and the welfare of his race, should have given to Captain STUART a presence of loveliness scarcely human.<sup>4</sup>

Even as early as the 1820s, the people of Utica had seen Stuart's dramatic mood swings and knew the other side of his character. In the summer of 1858, his host, Gerrit Smith, was about to see that side in person, apparently for the first time. The two old friends had a huge argument that would overshadow their correspondence for the next year. It was focused on their religious differences, but it became bitter because of Smith's outrage at the way Stuart treated Rebecca. When Rebecca showed an interest in the freethinking religious views Smith was developing during this period, Stuart reacted with harsh words and a violent temper. In Smith's opinion, Stuart's outburst was of a man who used religious orthodoxy as the rationale for domestic dictatorship. In a rare surviving letter written to Stuart, Smith wrote:

You are intollerant and abusive: in a word you are a tyrant, a tyrant even towards your wife, towards her who is so beautiful & heavenly in her temper, & whose husband you have shown yourself entirely unworthy to be. Deeply & frequently do dear Nancy & I, lament the life of this lovely woman, should be embittered by her connection with a tyrant.... I do not oppress my wife. I accord her the right of her own religion. I am not jealous of her. I do not claim her for my servant. I go to bed & leave her to sit up as long as she chuses, & to enjoy life with whom she chuses!!<sup>5</sup>

Stuart denied that he was selfish or jealous or that he made unjust claims on his wife's time. But in doing so, he confirmed Smith's allegation of tyranny. Stuart defended his actions by arguing:

My words are sometimes severely harsh; but the holiest love is most severe, when harshness is necessary to do it justice; and I am fully persuaded, that a sacred regard for her rectitude, as a worshipper of Christ, has invariably been my heart-loving motive, for any harsh words rendered by me towards her.... Violent bursts of temper, have been all my life, one of my besetting sins, & this is yet far from being eradicated.<sup>6</sup>

Apparently it came as something of a shock to Smith to discover this aspect of his friend's character. Stuart even used his admission of faults as an occasion for a counter-attack. He trusted that the revelation that Stuart had a bad side might help Smith to accept "saner views of human nature & human reason."<sup>7</sup> No less provocative was the way the letter to Smith began. His usual "My beloved Gerrit" was replaced by the slightly cooler "My dear Gerrit," which in turn was crossed out in favor of a blunt "Sir."<sup>8</sup> Smith wrote to Stuart, including a long list of their religious differences and then concluding, "You are a precious man in spite of your violent temper & terrible orthodoxy."<sup>9</sup> This exchange would continue but would be temporarily ended by Smith's mental breakdown late in 1859. Until then, Stuart bombarded him with even more letters. From August of 1858 to August of 1859, at least a dozen long and detailed letters of requests, thanks for financial advice, condemnations of Smith's rejection of scriptural orthodoxy, followed by endless reiterations of Stuart's religious beliefs, were sent by Stuart to Gerrit Smith. Only Smith's tolerance and perhaps deep sympathy for Rebecca's plight prevented the friendship from ending altogether.

The love Stuart had expressed toward Smith now seemed to be in question. He had written to Smith, "I love you with less sympathy."<sup>10</sup> Stuart also questioned how it was possible for him to continue loving someone who was an enemy of Christ. It soon became clear that his love would depend on Smith's abandoning his rationalist views and returning completely to Christ.<sup>11</sup> Smith evidently expressed bewilderment at Stuart's warning that he now loved him with less sympathy. Stuart replied that there were two kinds of love, i.e., "love of sympathy which is natural to all animals human or brute...and the love of Benevolence, which is perfect in God alone, & which real Christians alone can feel or understand."

He no longer felt the "love of sympathy" for Smith, although he expected always to cultivate the "love of benevolence" toward him. This was no more than he felt for "all men."<sup>12</sup> Yet this same correspondence, in the year following their great quarrel, reveals that this intellectual conclusion had been reached at great emotional cost. It shows a man moved by all the common human feelings of nostalgia, gratitude, and memories of shared experiences. In January of 1859, after finally abandoning all thoughts of moving to Peterboro, Stuart wrote warmly about the many attractions of such a move, including Smith's "almost unwearied kindness," as well as the "beauty of the place."<sup>13</sup> The real tragedy in Stuart's declining years can be found in his ruthless subordination of such feelings to the priority of his commitment to Christ as revealed to him in the Bible. He sounded confident as he saw the attractions of upstate New York give way to "other motives, as far superior to them, as Eternity is to time." He set up an extreme contrast between the spiritual "love of benevolence" and the merely animal "love

of sympathy," which could encompass not only the "purest virtue possible to mere humanity," but also "the most brutal lusts." And yet there was much more than merely a benevolent love for all people when he told Smith, "I am distressed about you.... I cannot but regard you, as in the broad path, which leads to everlasting death." A special regard for Smith was obvious in August of 1859, when he reflected bitterly on their quarrel a year previously and asked, "Say, shall we further correspond or not?" It was particularly evident in his relief when this harsh question prompted a "fond & flattering letter" from Smith and a "sweet forget-me-not posy" from Mrs. Smith.<sup>14</sup>

Although Smith's conciliatory gestures kept the strained friendship alive, this same month marked a further deterioration in Stuart's relationship with Theodore Weld. That Stuart would visit Weld after a three-year break in their correspondence is an indication of the desperation with which he clung to the hope of a renewed friendship. Stuart quickly discovered, however, that Weld was less willing than Smith to humor his relentless dogmatism. According to Stuart, the two only managed a hasty conversation, because, he accused Weld, "your more important duties as you deem them" made a quick meeting unavoidable. This was enough to convince Stuart that Weld's views were "most incorrect & dangerous to all within your influence." Still unwilling to accept that conclusion, however, he proceeded in asking Weld eleven questions that were fundamental to religious belief. He also demanded that every member of Weld's extended family, including his children, his brother, and sister Cornelia, should answer the same questions.<sup>15</sup>

Stuart knew, however, that there was virtually no hope for him to be “still lingering after the delights of our former sweet & sacred sympathy in the Scriptures.” But the rest of his letter revealed again the emotional intensity with which he had discovered Christ and discovered Weld and therefore the agony he felt in having to choose between them. He wrote of the desperate uncertainties of his childhood, of the self-destroying pride of his early manhood, and of his unwavering until “I found more & more in the Bible, what my soul wanted, a Perfect God, a Perfect Law, a Perfect Standard of morality & religion, with a Perfect example.” And turning nostalgic, he tried to recapture the essence of their mutual love as it had evolved thirty-five years earlier by saying:

It was you Theodore, as you were, or as I believed you to be in my soul; that I loved as I did; and not, a young man named T.D. Weld, adorned tho’ you were, with the eminent qualifications which distinguished you...neither an old man named Chs. Stuart, unadorned as he was, who you loved so ardently; but the character which you believed me to be...and oh, how gratefully & with what delight my heart would glow, could I now find in you, the same grounds for equal ardor of affection as formerly.<sup>16</sup>

Before Weld could respond to Stuart’s latest letter, Stuart was distracted by an unexpected turn in his relationship with Gerrit Smith. On October 16, 1859, John Brown, with a small band of white and black volunteers, raided the government arsenal in Harper’s Ferry in Virginia. The absurdity of this attempt to provoke black insurrection in the South did not prevent it from having a profound effect on American sectional tensions. The raid stirred the South into a more fervent defense of slavery, with tightened discipline of the black population. The news of Brown’s hanging made him a martyr in the eyes of many northerners, but the news was enough to plunge Gerrit Smith into temporary insanity.

Smith was always able to deny that he was implicated in the planning of Brown's raid. While it may be true that Smith was unaware of precise details, it is doubtful that he was completely unaware of Brown's general plans for an insurrection in the South. It is generally accepted that Brown visited Smith in his home in Peterboro in February and April of 1859. According to Frank Sanborn's *Recollections of Seventy Years*, Stuart was also present at the February meeting when Brown unfolded his plans. Sanborn's memory, however, seems to be at fault here. In those early months of 1859, Stuart was in Lora, writing to Smith about finances and theology, and these letters contain nothing to suggest an imminent visit was likely. If Sanborn did see Stuart and Brown at Smith's home, it must have been on an earlier occasion.<sup>17</sup> Stuart's isolation from American events was reflected in his learning about Smith's illness from the newspapers. He quickly wrote to Smith's wife, offering sympathy and seeking information. The remaining two-thirds of his letter contained corrections to a biblical reference he had misquoted in his previous letter. His concluding words, however, belied his recent claims that he no longer loved Smith with any special affection. He concluded, "In your prosperity, I loved you & Gerrit, deeply & warmly.... In your adversity, if indeed you be afflicted as I fear, my soul glows towards you both, with yet deeper & warmer love."<sup>18</sup> Only a conviction that his presence could not help prevented him and Rebecca from quickly going to Peterboro.

The winter of 1859-60 was an emotional time for Stuart. Weld had responded to Stuart's religious interrogation of his family in terms that dashed any hopes of a revival of their friendship. Weld had evidently still written affectionately but had suggested that he had never deserved Stuart's intense



regard. In accepting this criticism, Stuart revealed once again an aching nostalgia for the earlier days of their friendship by writing:

Yes, Theodore, in your natural state, delighted with the talents with which God had so eminently adorned you, I thought too highly of your moral state.... But, oh, how I was charmed with the blaze of beauty which enveloped you, when, apparently broken-hearted and penitent, you came forth as a believer in Jesus, a fervent preacher & liver, of the gospel of Christ, encountering labor & braving death.... Your track was a stream of glory! God visibly led you, and you followed Him apparently with all your heart.<sup>19</sup>

Now at last, however, Stuart gave up the struggle to reclaim Weld. This letter of January 14, 1860, was the last one he wrote to his "former friend, my friend intentionally still, T.D. Weld." The question between them was whether there were any man "so wise and holy" that he could "sanely & safely depend upon himself" for knowledge of God's will without a divine revelation. If there were, then, "might I choose, T.D. Weld, the assumed oracle of Eagleswood, for my God, because he is so eminently adorned with the loveliness of natural talent & virtue & because he so loves me."

But because Stuart insisted that his own faith was firmly based on the Bible, all that remained to him was "bitter disappointment."<sup>20</sup> He still loved Weld, but no longer as his friend.

...for with the principles which you embrace, & holding the course which you pursue, you know that I do not & cannot as an honest man, believe you to be my friend, or the friend of mankind.<sup>21</sup>

He said farewell with the hope that somehow Weld might escape perdition and they might be reunited "at the feet of Jesus." But his parting shot came in post-scripted comments about the curriculum at Eagleswood. Stuart viewed it as



"mainly hostile to the holiest interests in time & Eternity, of all who may come under your influence in it. I pity them and you."<sup>22</sup>

As the United States moved closer to civil war, Stuart's comments on public events were overshadowed by his conflicts with Smith and Weld. Only bitter generalizations about the American system greeted the start of southern secession, when Abraham Lincoln, the candidate of the purely northern Republican party, captured the presidency at the end of 1860. If there was one issue that bridged the gap separating him from the American crisis, it was the movement of black fugitives in Canada. He had, after all, been associated with some of the earliest fugitives in Amherstburg. It was only fitting that his last public antislavery activities, as late as January of 1861, revolved around this issue. John Anderson, a black man, was arrested in Canada in the fall of 1860 on a charge of murder, while escaping from Missouri as a slave. The case aroused intense interest in the Canadian press and at several meetings, as well as in the British and American antislavery press. Gerrit Smith had visited Canada to speak to meetings on Anderson's behalf. In view of all this pressure and because Anderson's appeal against extradition succeeded on a technicality in February of 1861, Stuart's intervention in the case can hardly be seen as decisive. But it does reveal his personal commitment that the case would arouse him to activity at the age of eighty. He wrote to Smith that his age and a "fading heart" had persuaded him that he would never again make the journey to Toronto. But a recent letter from his friend in Peterboro, suggesting that he meet him there, persuaded him to make one last effort. Stuart made arrangements to stay with his nieces and to meet Smith. Again, almost nostalgically longing for the old days of antislavery

agitation, he wrote to Smith, "We shall then, I trust be able to collect a public meeting." He argued that Smith's address would be "importantly useful" whether Anderson had by then been freed or not, "for this is a subject, on which the Canadian mind, needs to be well-informed, & to which the Canadian heart, greatly wants to be effectively awakened."<sup>23</sup>

By this period, Stuart had long given up hope that American hearts and minds would be awakened. In February of 1861, after the first six seceding states of the lower South had organized the Confederate States of America, he wrote to Gerrit Smith concerning his personal fears about the coming war. He was worried about the fate of Rebecca and her sisters if certain "probable events," including his own death and "aggravated convulsions in the United States," occurred to jeopardize the mortgages Smith had arranged in New York State. Smith must have misunderstood this concern, but he could hardly have been pleased that, among the events Stuart considered "probable," was a recurrence of the "physical & mental prostration" that had seized Smith with "tyger-grasp" at the time of the John Brown raid. Regardless, Smith made a reassuring reply in early March, expressing the flicker of hope that the United States might still avoid the "pro-slavery abyss of hypocrisy & blood."<sup>24</sup>

This hope was short-lived because the Civil War broke out a few weeks later. In his letters, Stuart continued to stress the deep "pro-slavery corruption of the national mind (northern as well as southern)." This pessimism is understandable, given the circumstances and his impatience with compromise. In the Republican Party, genuine antislavery sentiment was outweighed by "free soil" attitudes epitomized by the President himself. Opposed to the extension of

slavery but committed not to interfere with it where it stood, Lincoln most consistently responded to the race problem by advocating colonization of blacks outside the United States. Although such policies were slightly less provocative than they had been thirty years before because some black leaders had become interested in various emigration projects in the 1850s, they can have done little to arouse the sympathy of a mind as inflexible as Stuart's, which had once devised some of the most complete and compelling anti-colonization arguments. Certainly in the contempt he expressed for Lincoln in his letters to Smith over the next two years, there was no sympathy for the complexity of the President's political problems, which were also contributing to his failure to turn the war into a campaign against slavery. Stuart wrote:

In thus doing, he might succeed or fail...but in either case, alike; he would be serving the cause of God and his country; of liberty & impartial right, with God's own weapons, instead of restoring to human policies & arts to help him.<sup>25</sup>

The artful policies of Lincoln that Stuart despised involved not only balancing many conflicting attitudes in Washington, but also ensuring that crucial slaveholding border states were not driven to secede.<sup>26</sup> Stuart's indifference to such considerations was revealed in his detestation of General John Fremont's proclamation of August 31, freeing the slaves of the rebels in the border state of Missouri but allowing loyal slave-owners to keep theirs. He wrote:

Who are slave-holders, loyal or disloyal? Are they not, as a body, the most iniquitous, impure & ferocious of any other class on earth? What is to conciliate them, but to conciliate crime, of the grossest, most selfish, proud & ferocious description.

Even as Stuart was berating this "limping step" toward emancipation, Lincoln was moving to rescind it as too provocative in a delicate military and

political situation. As a result, on this and other occasions, Stuart saw the differences between Lincoln and his southern counterpart, Jefferson Davis, as a question only of degree. In this regard, both were defenders of the slave system he had spent his lifetime trying to defeat.<sup>27</sup>

It is quite possible that Stuart wrote other letters during this period that have not survived or have not yet been discovered. There can be little doubt that Gerrit Smith was his main correspondent. A single letter to Charles and Cornelia Weld, prompted by anxiety about the war situation in September of 1861, showed that there was no hope of a renewed friendship with Theodore, who "has entirely separated himself from me...except indeed I would prefer him to Christ."<sup>28</sup> It is unlikely that someone as unbending as Stuart made any attempt at re-establishing his long-severed connections with British abolitionists. There is no recorded contact between Stuart and John Scoble, who was also now living in Canada. Although the Civil War perhaps succeeded in Stuart's wish that American slavery was in the center of British antislavery attention, the new Emancipation Society that emerged to express this interest was dominated by British supporters of Garrison. None of this is to suggest that Smith's views earned Stuart's approval, but it does suggest that Stuart found in Smith an ideal outlet for the frustration of his exile. Stuart was fortunate that Smith was willing to sustain a prolonged debate, even while being warned that the quality of his arguments suggested that a return to the asylum was imminent.<sup>29</sup>

The wartime letters to Smith were divided fairly evenly between political comments and the continuing religious debate. But in Stuart's mind, there was no real division. He argued, "The principle cause...of the horrid troubles of your

country...is the rebellion of your people against God.” And Smith, with his new rationalist views, was an extreme example, in Stuart’s mind, of the rejection of God’s revealed word. As such, Stuart’s pronouncements were overly simplistic and indifferent to the details of a complex political and military situation. Even when Stuart did address actual problems, he displayed what can be described as an equally impractical political fundamentalism. He repeatedly told Smith, as he had told antislavery audiences a quarter-century before, that the Constitution did not sanction slavery. It was as close to perfection as anything humans could devise and that “Adherence to it is all that is wanted for the practical safety & happiness of the United States.”<sup>30</sup> For Stuart to hold such a view required a romantic view on his part and a questionable literal interpretation of the Constitution. Stuart could not have been unaware of the sectional compromises over slavery that had accompanied the drafting of the Constitution in 1787. And while the document made no direct reference to slavery, it was skillfully included in other provisions. Even if his own knowledge and intelligence had not told him these things, the arguments of William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionists had done so since the mid-1830s. In that circumstance, perhaps, lies the main reason why Stuart refused to admit to Smith that the Constitution was anything less than ideal. Repeatedly in his final correspondence, the name of Garrison emerged as a symbol of the immoral wrong-headedness of the United States. Garrison, “distinguished tho’ he may be by talents and unbending will,” had done the most to propagate the “gross & senseless” interpretation of the Constitution.<sup>31</sup>

It was Smith’s tolerance for an aging man that explains why Smith was willing to correspond with one who condemned his views as “ridiculously absurd”

and dismissed Lincoln as "a disgrace to human nature." By 1862, there were many reminders that Stuart was now in his eighties. His commentaries on the Civil War and his attention to financial details reveal a mind still alert, even if rigid. His references to death reveal no wavering of faith. His increasingly weak handwriting, revealed in his letters of this later period, however, demonstrates that he was growing weaker. In April, he expressed a desire to visit Peterboro again in the summer, but by July he was declaring that "my travelling days are gone, without any prospect of returning."<sup>32</sup>

Soon, a debilitating illness gave his female dependants the chance to indicate, through letters to Smith, their own difficulties in sharing what Rebecca called this "very solitary place" with Stuart. In August 1862, Rebecca's sister, Margaret, prepared to embark on the return journey to Ireland with their ninety-five-year-old father. She wrote to Smith, apologizing for the "precipitance" of Stuart's constant queries on their behalf. She hoped that Smith would ignore any further provocation, would keep secret her own letter to him, and would continue to offer the guidance on which her sister Rebecca would remain totally dependent. In December, Rebecca was forced to decline an invitation to visit Peterboro. Because of religious differences, "Charles would by no means approve of my visiting you," she wrote, but then added before mailing the letter, "I would." In a secretive postscript, she told how very disagreeable it had been for her to write this refusal "dictated by Charles." It was an "abomination" to her to deceive him with these secret comments, but she had no alternative. She added, "I will say of him what I frequently said of Father, he was 95, C. is 81, & you bear with him."<sup>33</sup>

Rebecca's letter made it clear that Stuart had been very ill, had difficulty walking, and was much different from the last time Smith had seen him. Smith probably didn't notice much change when Stuart resumed writing the following month, thanking him for his "unwearied kindness," and then attacking Smith's views. Lincoln's recently announced Emancipation Proclamation was still "sinfully compromising" and offered no prospects for a "righteous" abolition of slavery. In March 1863, a more detailed sixteen-paragraph letter reiterated his despair with Smith and his compatriots. He repeated the theme that the cause of American chaos was the "rebellion of your people against God," but the principle symptom was still the Garrisonian misinterpretation of the Constitution. Although he had read recently that Garrison had "repented...the poison still deeply rankles, & you my beloved Gerrit, have, I think, shared largely...in the disasters which it has produced & is producing."<sup>34</sup>

On June 8, 1863, Stuart wrote to Smith what proved to be his last traceable letter, even though he lived two more years. There was nothing final about it as he mixed his usual concerns for financial matters with his despair about the American scene. He was, however, more willing than usual to find common ground with Smith, conceding that the atrocious chattel slave system had been aggravated by the "Brazen-faced devilism of the Secession movement." Nevertheless, he concluded, "I cannot avoid regarding your nation's rejection of God, as revealed by Himself, in the Bible, your master crime."<sup>35</sup> Stuart lived to see the end of the Civil War confirm the abolition of slavery. He lived to see the President, whose leadership had made abolition possible, assassinated. It is uncertain as to whether he was exultant at the attainment of his life's goal, still



hostile to the devious expediency of Lincoln's antislavery policies, or indifferent to the realities of the American scene which had so long offended his religious convictions.

Charles Stuart died on May 16, 1865. A death notice appeared in the *Toronto Globe* on June 9. The brief notice mentioned that he was "Extensively known for his ardent anti-slavery principles." There was no obituary appearing anywhere else. His contribution to the antislavery cause was already largely forgotten.<sup>36</sup>

Much of this obscurity was inevitable. At the time of Stuart's death, many of the one-time leaders and friends of his friends had died. There were perhaps few living abolitionists who had been around long enough to remember the significance of his extensive international career. There were also those who had not forgotten Stuart, but who had no desire to recall his achievements. George Thompson, Stuart's fellow Agency Committee lecturer, had been persuaded by him to believe in Garrison's integrity and had shared with him the task of consolidating the early Anglo-American antislavery cooperation. But Thompson had remained Garrison's friend, and Stuart's emergence as a "great Garrison-hater" in the 1840s had obliterated, in Thompson's mind, the warm admiration he had expressed for Stuart in the early 1830s. While Garrison could not have known the frequency with which his name was mentioned in Stuart's correspondence, he had long since recoiled from what he deemed the treachery of his once dear friend. John Scoble had been Stuart's ally in working for the repudiation of Garrison's Old Organization by British abolitionists. But the two had clashed over antislavery policies toward India and Africa. For this reason,



even though Scoble was living in Canada in 1865, he ignored the death of his old Agency Committee associate and travelling companion in the West Indies in 1838 and 1839. Perhaps most poignant of all, there was no published appreciation from the man who had meant so much to Stuart for the past forty years. Theodore Weld, long withdrawn from antislavery activity, did not choose to publicly recall the intensity Stuart had brought to their friendship, to their involvement in Finney's revival, and to the great cause they had both discovered in the early 1830s.

Stuart's involvement in the beginnings of immediatist agitation on both sides of the Atlantic was unmatched by any other individual. In Britain, his pamphlets led the way in insisting that "immediately" meant "now" rather than "as soon as practicable." And his lecturing agencies in Ireland and in England developed methods of presenting the immediatist case, which meant that his role as a founding member and then field agent of the Agency Committee was vital. It is ironic that these positive contributions have been largely forgotten and that Stuart is seen mostly as a British abolitionist whose contribution was to the lost cause of refusing compensation to colonial slave-owners. In fact, his *West India Question*, in which he developed his anti-compensation argument, is most important for its transatlantic impact, which in turn points to his international significance in the late 1830s.

Although much of his contribution to American antislavery was more indirect than in Britain, it was not insignificant. His personal influence on a young Theodore Weld and the inspiration of his anti-colonization arguments on Garrison made him an important early influence in the lives and thinking of two of

the most prominent abolitionists. If his own work as an American antislavery agent was less innovative than his comparable role in Britain, it confirmed his stature as a vital exponent of international antislavery cooperation. He had become a hero of the American antislavery press, not because of his private influence on Weld, but because of the very successful public attack he mounted against the American Colonization Society in Britain. In the United States, he survived grueling months of campaigning with a success that eluded George Thompson for all his eloquence. He did so, not by compromising his principles, as Americans accused other British abolitionists of doing, but by painstaking industry in dozens of local meetings, by constant reiteration of his simple creed in state and national gatherings, by private instruction to the fledgling agents of the national society, and by conspicuous nonchalance in the face of public danger in New England and upstate New York.

The late 1830s saw him repeating his influential role in Britain in the final overthrow of Negro apprenticeship. If he remained energetic for years to come, this was the end of his truly positive achievements. While his visit to the West Indies in 1839-1840 proved him to be energetic, the tangible relevance to the antislavery movement remains somewhat questionable. Stuart's years of achievement were a very small portion of his otherwise long life. He had become an abolitionist only in middle age, and he was effective in that role for less than a decade. The last twenty years of his life were spent in ineffectual isolation. The long decades of groping for fulfillment and the long period of anticlimax can be understood only in the context of his personality. To almost everyone who knew him, he was seen as eccentric, while to others he was insane. Yet it would be

wrong to conclude that his distinctive life has no wider relevance. This might be the case if Stuart had become eccentric or "insane" only in his old age. But Stuart was distinctive, eccentric, and, according to some, insane all throughout his adult life. For this reason, the way his passionate fervor was in turn compelling, disruptive, and finally irrelevant, says much about the antislavery circumstances in which he successively flourished and ultimately floundered.

Much of what Stuart's career reveals is already broadly familiar. But in one important respect, it sheds new light on the overthrow of British colonial slavery between 1829 and 1833, which historians are still striving to explain. The validity of recent emphasis on popular pressure on a massive scale cannot be denied. The petitions that flooded Westminster from every corner of the British Isles, in particular, point to the breadth of concern with the question. But the populace needed to be informed, petitions organized, and the techniques of extracting pledges from candidates refined and explained. Charles Stuart's involvement in these processes before and after the foundation of the Agency Committee points to the importance of local organizers in the provinces and particularly to the connections between them. Stuart, with his military pension and lack of family ties, was a particularly suitable agent. With his American revivalist experience, he had something unique to contribute.

That early network of antislavery activists was held together by predominantly religious motives. Although in some individual cases, religious and East Indian economic interests were conveniently compatible, it would be impossible and unfair to contemplate the abolitionism of Stuart, who himself had a vested interest in the East India Company, apart from the overwhelming

importance of a genuine religious impulse that guided him. Stuart's own attitudes, however, are a clear reminder that even the most unworldly abolitionists were likely to have economic assumptions and that even the most sophisticated modern assessment of the slave economy will reveal nothing about the motives of those who challenged slavery. It obviously suited Stuart's purposes to insist that slavery was economically less efficient than free labor. He and others who advanced similar arguments were clearly doing so in an atmosphere in which the decline of West Indian slavery was widely assumed, notwithstanding modern demonstrations of its vigor.

Underlying Stuart's continuing optimism about free labor, in the face of contrary evidence and amid the daunting demands of his West Indian journey, was a large measure of sheer stubbornness. It was precisely this stubbornness that eventually limited his antislavery role. Yet Stuart's limitations are as revealing as are his achievements. By his rigid refusal to alter or develop any of his attitudes, he demonstrated the inadequacies of the immediatist innovations of the 1830s outside the special circumstances of a British decision about British colonial slavery. His constant calls for a return to proven methods were mostly too simplistic for a British antislavery movement identifying evil in many corners of the world but deprived of a single massive target. And they were always irrelevant to the complexities of the American situation. Although a less intense personality could have continued to find much in common with both British and American abolitionists, Stuart's career also serves to emphasize that the Atlantic community of reform depended on much more than mobility, a common language, and a common religious impulse. With his Jamaican birth and his

Anglo-American background, there could be no more international figure. His views on Ireland and India revealed his deep loyalty to the British empire, something many conservative American abolitionists had difficulty accepting. Much of his rhetoric proved him to be out of touch with the real America. At the same time, Stuart also demonstrated a seemingly inconsistent interest in the real problems facing Britain. Even his eventual work among the starving peasants in Ireland reveals his sporadic concern over urban poverty, while he remained indifferent to class antagonism and Chartist agitation. As he crossed the Atlantic thirteen times between 1815 and 1850, his ultimate fate was to be irrelevant in both English-speaking countries. Stuart became a perpetual outsider in Britain and a foreign critic in and on the borders of the United States. It was inevitable but unfortunate that this should obscure the importance of the abolitionist who most completely personified the religious fervor that had challenged slavery head-on and with dramatic suddenness from 1829 onward. For such was the contribution of Captain Charles Stuart.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Stuart to Smith, September 26, 1857, Smith Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart to Smith, November 27, 1855, April 10, September 4, November 18, December 9, 30, 1856; January 20, 26, February 9, March 14, April 18, July 11, August 15, September 26, 1857; February 6, 1858; March 26, April 9, 26, May 28, June 1, 10, 1859; February 21, March 9, April 20, May 22, September 28, 1861, Smith Papers. Some of these include mortgage agreements, contracts, affidavits, and other documents signed by Stuart and his wife and Smith.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart to Smith, November 27, 1855, Smith Papers.

<sup>4</sup> *Memorial of the Semi-Centennial Celebratin of the Founding of the Sunday School of the First Presbyterian Church, Utica, N.Y.*, Utica, NY, 1867, pp. 213-214. Clark was presumably the son of Erastus Clark who had supported his nephew, Theodore Weld, in the early 1820s before Stuart took over the responsibility.

<sup>5</sup> Smith to Stuart, August 10, 1858, Smith Papers.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart to Smith, August 15, 1858, Smith Papers.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Smith to Stuart, August 10, 1858, Smith Papers.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart to Smith, February 5, 1859, Smith Papers.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart to Smith, April 9, 1859, Smith Papers.

<sup>12</sup> Stuart to Smith, August 6, 1859, Smith Papers.

<sup>13</sup> Stuart to Smith, January 1, 1859, Smith Papers.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart to Smith, January 1, June [?], August 6, September 3, 1859, Smith Papers.

<sup>15</sup> Stuart to Weld, August [?], 1859, Weld Papers.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Filler, *Crusade Against Slavery*, pp. 244, 269-272; Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment*, pp. 541-542; Sanborn, *Recollections*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>18</sup> Stuart to Nancy Smith, November 21, 1859, Smith Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Stuart to Weld, January 14, 1860, Weld Papers.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>23</sup> Stuart to Smith, January 7, 1861, Smith Papers; Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, pp. 175-176.
- <sup>24</sup> Stuart to Smith, February 21, March 9, 1861, Smith Papers.
- <sup>25</sup> Stuart to Smith, September 28, October [?], 1861, January 1, March 6, 1862, Smith Papers; Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1831-1861*, 1974, pp. 251-277.
- <sup>26</sup> James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery*, London, 1996, p. 169.
- <sup>27</sup> Stuart to Smith, September 28, 1861, January 1, March 6, 1862, Smith Papers.
- <sup>28</sup> Stuart to Charles and Cornelia Weld, September 9, 1861, Weld Papers.
- <sup>29</sup> Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 14; Stuart to Smith, March 30, April 20, 1861, Smith Papers.
- <sup>30</sup> Stuart to Smith, August 18, 1862, March 27, 1863, March 30, April 20, May 22, September 28, 1861, Smith Papers.
- <sup>31</sup> Stuart to Smith, March 27, 1863, Smith Papers.
- <sup>32</sup> Stuart to Smith, January 10, April 19, July 30, 1862, Smith Papers.
- <sup>33</sup> Margaret Watt to Smith, August 25, 1862; Rebecca Stuart to Nancy Smith, December [?], 1862, Smith Papers.
- <sup>34</sup> Stuart to Smith, January 8, March 27, 1863, Smith Papers.
- <sup>35</sup> Stuart to Smith, June 8, 1863, Smith Papers.
- <sup>36</sup> Toronto *Globe*, June 9, 1865.

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